

Design Officer Comments

HGY/2020/0795

Former Petrol Filling Station, 76 Mayes Road, London N22

Redevelopment of the site to provide a single building of between 4 and 9 storeys in height, comprising 75 residential units (C3) and 953 sqm of flexible commercial floorspace (Use Classes A1-A5, B1 and B8), with associated cycle parking, plant, refuse and recycling provision, landscaping and all necessary ancillary and enabling works.

Applicant: Caxton Road LLP

Agent: DP9

Architects: PRP Architects

Site Location and Context

1. Centre of the borough, in the heart of Wood Green, just off the High Road, just outside the Heartlands / Cultural Quarter zone but in the heart of the Haringey Heartlands / Wood Green Growth area; indeed at the “knuckle between the two “arms” of the growth area, along the High Road and the north-south spine of Heartlands.
2. A roughly square site with its south-western edge fronting Mayes Road, north-western edge fronting Caxton Road, and its north-eastern and south-eastern edges fronting the access ramp to the main multi-storey carpark to The Mall shopping centre. So, the site is also immediately beside The Mall, formerly Wood Green Shopping City, and originally a petrol station attached to that 1970s “megastructure” development, containing a retail mall with anchor stores, high street shops, restaurants, cinema and, immediately next to this site, an indoor stalls market, as well as offices, some XXX homes and also immediately next to this site, above the Market and other neighbouring retail units an XXX space multi-storey car park, with its access ramp. It is architecturally striking, in a mixture of sharp, industrial red brick, bare exposed and white painted concrete and dark brown, powder coated metal glazing and cladding, in a striking, *brutalist*, *neo-Constructivist*, composition building up from 4-5 storeys to 9-10 storeys.
3. However, the main frontage to The Mall is onto, and indeed bridging over, Wood Green High Road, and the ...feeling of being the back. Where fronts onto Mayes Road, south-east of this site, it is largely as a blank wall with just a couple of small, low grade retail units, and although there is an Iceland store immediately opposite, Mayes Road is otherwise a mostly residential street, fronted by two to four storey, late nineteenth century houses, set behind front gardens , although it is a broad street, with fairly busy traffic. Caxton Road is a short and narrower street, with smaller two storey residential houses along the whole side facing the site, and with the side wall and side of the back garden of the next house on Mayes Road, the more important street, presenting a mostly blank face to the southern end of this side of the site. The other half of the same side of Caxton Road as the site, after the entrance to the carpark in the middle of its length, is the recent, three storey Islamic Cultural Centre; it is architecturally undistinguished, but significantly it is built up to the pavement edge, so its two sides contrast sharply already.
4. Caxton Road ends in a right-angled corner for vehicles, where it becomes Park View Road, a similarly modest street with two-storey residential on the left also contrasting sharply with surface parking, the rear of shops on the High Road (particularly the Morrison’s supermarket) and taller flatted blocks at its northern end. Opposite the end of Caxton Road, the vista is closed by the blank rear façade of the former Post Office, which since closing last year has been used temporarily as artists’ display space. It forms part of a smaller mall than The Mall, also .
5. Mayes Road, running south-east to north-west including along the south-western frontage of this application street, is a wider street than Caxton and forms the main frontage to the site as the street network is currently laid out. It opens out onto Wood Green Common 230m north-west, where it joins Station Road midway between Wood Green Underground and Alexandra Palace National Rail stations, which themselves are some 650m and 750m away from the site. To the south-east, Mayes Road turns to become Hornsey Park Road running south to Turnpike Lane,

and together form a fairly busy local distributor street, as well as being mostly of residential character and lined with mostly late Victorian, 2 and 3 storey terraced and semi-detached houses with short front gardens.

6. West of Mayes Road and Hornsey Park Road the character changes to more industrial, up to the embankment of the East Coast Main Line railway some 400m west of the site. This area is currently undergoing major transformation into a mixed residential and workspace neighbourhood with higher density, higher rise developments under construction and planned. Beyond the railway, and the New River infrastructure of reservoirs and water works, character changes dramatically again, with the large public open space of Alexandra Park topped by the Palace. The park is some 950m from the site and the council is improving access to it using funds generated by development in this area.

Planning Policy Context

7. The application site is an adopted site in our Site Allocations DPD (SA DPD, adopted July 2017), and in the latest draft of the emerging Wood Green Area Action Plan DPD (WG AAP, consultation draft, February 2018). In the adopted SA DPD this site is part of "SA11: Wood Green Library", along with the Library site itself and the neighbouring Islamic Cultural Centre site between this site and the library (it also contains that bit of the car park ramp between this site and the cultural centre). The site allocation is for:

"Subject to reprovision of the existing library use, redevelopment to create enhanced town centre uses, a new library, residential development, and a new urban square with pedestrian and cycle route linking Wood Green High Road to Alexandra Palace."

The allocation notes that the site "incorporates a number of uses ... [and] will create an opportunity to deliver a new central public space with active uses to form a gateway to the redevelopment sites to the west and Alexandra Palace". Relevant Site Requirements are: active frontages [generally], a new urban square with primary town centre uses, a new connection through the site establishing a clear, visible, link from Wood Green High Road, through the new urban square, to Wood Green's western heartland, and ground and first floor town centre uses, with residential above. Relevant Development Guidelines are that; the new urban square be the new civic heart of Wood Green, development heights on parts of the site directly opposite residential buildings on Caxton and Mayes Roads respecting their residential amenity, providing an attractive, safe and generous east west pedestrian and cycling connection linking into the wider cycle network, The Mall can be used as a boundary wall to the south eastern edge of the site creating a development parcel south of the new east-west route, and parking should be minimised.

8. In the draft WG AAP this site is part of "WG SA9: THE MALL (WEST)", along with the half of The Mall west of the High Road (also containing all of the car park ramp). The site allocation is for:

"Redevelopment of existing shopping city and surrounding properties to create a refreshed town centre focussed around a new Town Square, with new mixed use development comprising of town centre ground floor uses along a new street layout, with a mix of residential and office uses above."

The allocation focusses on the potential for redevelopment of The Mall, but notes its overprovision of parking and poor urban design outlook and permeability. Site Requirements and Development Guidelines are largely the same as in the SA DPD, but also require a masterplan, and guide that development on Mayes Rd should be residential or employment, rather than establishing a single-sided retail street opposite retained residences, with Town Centre uses opposite the current commercial frontages expected.

9. The planning policy context also of course includes all the policies of the borough-wide Local Plan (2017) and London-wide London Plan (2016).
10. Existing neighbouring allocated sites include the Library and Islamic Cultural Centre site and The Mall itself, adjoining to the north-east and south-east of this site. There are no approved or committed emerging proposals for these sites, but confidential early discussions indicate proposals are likely to come forward shortly. Not far to the north, the Morrisons supermarket, including its' and neighbouring site's large areas of surface car parking is allocation site SA10 (WG SA7). Immediately across Mayes Road from this site, on the corner of Brook Road, the

Iceland Store and its large surface car park behind it forms Site Allocation SA21 (WG SA11), which has planning permission, subject to signing their Section 106 Agreement, for mixed use development of retail, workspace and health centre on the ground and first floors, residential above, in a row of four adjoined mansion blocks rising from seven to nine storeys, the tallest being at the Mayes Road corner immediately opposite this application site. On the other side of Brook Road, behind the houses facing this application site on Mayes Road, the site known as Bittern Place also part of Site Allocation SA21 (but in the draft AAP a separate allocation WG SA17) which is currently a low rise industrial estate but for which discussions have been had regarding a higher rise mixed use development. Beyond Iceland and Bittern Place is the Former Clarendon Gasworks site allocation SA22 (WG SA18), that has approval and is currently under construction, as “Clarendon Square”, for a large mixed use development including residential, retail, workspace, community uses and public parkland and open space, in a new neighbourhood of medium rise blocks rising to 18 storeys.

11. The Council has wider strategic ambitions that significantly concern this applications site, for these developments to contribute to a coherent expansion strengthening of Wood Green Metropolitan Centre, into the “Heartlands” area of mostly former industrial land between the centre and the East Coast Main Line railway. A crucial part of this is using developments to assist in creating a strong East-West link from the High Road to Heartlands, turning off the High Road at the Library, and using Caxton Road and/or Brook Road. This site is therefore in the middle of this intended East-West Link, but is a small site that cannot on its own create the link, which cannot be realised until development of the Islamic Cultural Centre, Library and most importantly The Mall, come forward. Nevertheless, it would be unreasonable to deny the possibility of a reasonable development on this site, provided the proposals include a masterplan showing how it can fit in with developments on those neighbouring blocks *and* their continued current use, whilst supporting different likely permutations of East-West Link.

Masterplan & Streetscape Character

12. Their masterplan proposals are shown on pages 47 to 53 of their Design and Access Statement, and show how these proposals could fit into a likely redevelopment of the neighbouring Mall, Islamic Cultural Centre and Library sites in accordance with their Site Allocations from our adopted and latest draft policy, and the approved Iceland site. The key masterplanning aspirations are the East-West Link for the High Road to Heartlands, greater east-west permeability generally, and the new “Civic Heart” on the Library/Cultural Centre site.
13. Earlier aspirations of The Council, described in the draft AAP, contemplated a broad, reasonably straight East-West Link that as well as using these development sites, would “plough through” some of the existing houses on Mayes and/or Caxton Road, but that aspect of the council’s vision is no longer being contemplated; instead the intentions are that no existing dwellings should need to be demolished. In particular, it is recognised that many of the existing houses, including most of those on Mayes and Caxton Roads close to this application site, are good quality examples of ordinary, nineteenth century domestic architecture, as well as being much loved homes. This officer’s view is not only that retention of the existing houses alongside new buildings on non-residential sites will contribute to a neighbourhood of rich and varied character but that a good East-West Link will still be achievable using the land available and existing streets, with the continuation west of Mayes Road more likely to be via Brook Road than Coburg Road, and the masterplan prepared as part of this development demonstrates a new east-west street along or close to the edge of The Mall, which the south west face of their development would face onto, would link well to such a continuation along Brook Road, with the approved scheme for the Iceland site and the 2 storey commercial units on the south-east side of their development giving the East-West Route a continuous, vibrant, active Town Centre frontage. It is also worth noting that whilst approval and implementation of this application scheme would contribute strongly to the realisation of that alignment of East-West Link, it would also incidentally most probably rule out the more destructive idea for an East-West Link ploughing through the existing houses on Mayes Road.
14. At the same time the applicants’ masterplan ideas need to show they can accommodate continued use of neighbouring identified potential development sites as they are at present, or with more modest change than a comprehensive redevelopment. The proposals for the Iceland site are known. The Library and Islamic Cultural Centre and Library site is in the Council’s ownership, and early ideas are being developed for this as part of the Council’s accommodation

strategy for intensification with re-provision of enhanced council services with other uses as well as some sort of improved public space, possibly as a town or market square. But the owners of the most important site, The Mall, have now indicated to officers they do not envisage a comprehensive redevelopment in the short or medium term, rather to do smaller developments of underused car parking, service yards and other edges of their land, generally by remodelling existing structures rather than demolishing. This application site itself was in their ownership until recently sold after being identified as being surplus to their requirements.

15. How these proposals can accommodate existing neighbouring existing uses is covered in detail further down this document. But it is worth noting in the context of masterplanning and streetscape character how the existing Mall could change. The immediate neighbour of this site, along its north-east and south-east sides, is the ramp with cars use to access a large multi-storey car park. There appear to be areas under the ramp that are open to the site, and potentially an opening under the corner of the ramp, through to their service yard behind the Islamic Cultural Centre, currently boarded up. The wall under the ramp to the south-east of this site is onto the indoor market area of The Mall, with a service corridor between the outside wall and the stalls. The service yard is apparently underused as retail increasingly moves to just in time daily small deliveries rather than large bulk deliveries for which this was designed. The indoor market is vibrant and a crucial part of the Wood Green economy, but suffers from lack of visibility and an unappealing appearance exacerbated by is low ceilings and absence of natural light.
16. This opens several possibilities as to how modest infill and alteration projects by The Mall could work with this development and the Library / Cultural Centre development and create an East-West Link. The terms of the sale by the owners of The Mall to these applicants were apparently to define the boundary between their two respective properties at a small offset from the edge of the ramp. The applicant's masterplan allows for the indoor market within The Mall to be opened up onto the yard space along the south-eastern side of this proposal, either physically or visually, possibly to spill out into the yard space, and/or to use the "undercroft" area under the ramp. If and when an infill development on the service yard comes forward, this applicants masterplan allows the yard space to be extended under the ramp into the service yard area, which could become an pedestrian street extending through to The High Road and opening onto the planned Civic Heart.
17. Therefore the inevitable conclusion is their site be treated as an "island", with potentially a public street frontage, onto a vibrant town centre type street, is a distinct possibility on all four, or certainly three sides (the one that is least likely being the north-eastern side onto the lower part of the car park ramp. The present situation is that its Mayes Road frontage is the most important, and that is likely to remain a street of fairly high importance, with a mixture of residential, employment and town centre functions and a need to have an active frontage. The likely potential future outcome is that the south-eastern side of their site will become the main East-West Link, from Wood Green Town Centre to Heartlands and beyond, but in the short to medium term it will merely face the blank flank wall of The Mall. The proposed 2 storey workspaces, with double height frontages and windows, will mark and animate this frontage and be flexible enough to accommodate both immediate and various possible future settings. This East-West Link would continue across Mayes Road at this point and thence along Brook Road, and the southern corner of this development will partially close the vista along Brook Road. Hence the primary corner of the scheme is it's southern corner, which is treated as a high point, a local landmark, with a prominent two storey base, marking and turning the corner of Mayes Road and the future East-West Link.

Form, Pattern of Development, Bulk & Massing

18. The proposals are for a courtyard, podium block, with the four blocks enclosing a central space at 1st floor level, with the whole of the site being built on at the ground floor. People in the courtyard can have glimpses out (and people in the street have glimpses into the courtyard) through two gaps between the block along the north-western side of the site and those along the north-eastern and south-western sides, and the four sides rise to different heights; the lowest, north-western side to 4 storeys (3 storeys from the courtyard, the north-east and south-west sides to 7 storeys (6 from the courtyard – with the north-east side losing another floor at its north-western end, to 5 storeys from the street), and the highest south-eastern side to 9 storeys (8 from the courtyard).

19. This gives the proposals a modelled form from the outside, that responds to the differing nature of the surrounding context and reflects the transition from the 2 to 4 storey context to the north-west and the 8 storey plus context (with higher floor-ceiling heights in their commercial floors) of the existing Mall/Sky City and emerging proposals for other neighbouring major development sites. This is an appropriate response in this location with urban character that inevitably has low rise nineteenth century suburban housing cheek by jowl with a high intensity metropolitan town centre of a central character, as the London Plan defines character and as the council's Urban Character Study confirmed.
20. The gaps along the north-east façade, onto the quieter, narrower, lower-rise and more residential Caxton Road streetscape, will break up the grain and rhythm of this street frontage, which will add to the lower height of the proposal along this street in giving it a lower impact here.

Elevational Treatment, Fenestration, including Balconies, and Materials

21. The proposed modelling and massing concept is carried through into the proposed material choices, fenestration pattern and elevational composition. They propose a palette of three contrasting complimentary bricks, used on three contrasting elements, appropriate for their situations and chosen to compliment and reference existing local context. This is combined with window shape and proportions based on local precedent, with detailing such as window reveals and balcony balustrading appropriate to function as well as picking up on existing local and nearby detailing including the window patterns in the Great Rose Window of Alexandra Palace.
22. Two different brick colours are proposed for the outside elevations; a darker brick based on colours of bricks typically found in the town centre, used to define the key corners of the development onto Mayes and Caxton Roads, and a lighter brick based on houses typically found in surrounding quieter streets, used to create variety and visually slim the tallest element. A third brick for the courtyard, which are contrasted further with an off white brick to the internal courtyard walls, which will reflect light into the courtyard and create an interesting, striking detail at corners, providing a hint of the courtyard from the street.

Residential Quality (flat, room & private amenity space shape, size, quality and aspect)

23. All maisonette, flat and room sizes comply with or exceed minima defined in the Nationally Described Space Standards, as is to be routinely expected.
24. All dwellings meet or exceed the private external amenity space in the London Plan, with private balconies or roof terraces. Privacy of amenity space is achieved by many balconies being recessed, and those that are not being at least partially solid balustraded. Many flats have larger roof terraces, exploiting the design which permits roof terraces in the steps in the blocks.
25. There are no single aspect flat in the whole development; this is a major benefit of the relatively tight courtyard layout with "deck access" chosen here. All flats are at least dual aspect, many triple aspect, an amazing and exemplary achievement in such a high density urban development (although perhaps more typical in high density, low rise mews type developments than in developments of large blocks).
26. There is also access to doorstep private communal amenity space, including doorstep playspace, within the development. There are three private communal external amenity spaces; the 1st floor podium courtyard and two roof terraces, both at 7th floor, covering almost the whole of the roofs of the north-eastern and south western blocks (the former being slightly larger than the latter). The podium courtyard will be a busy space, with all circulation, all access to all dwellings, coming through it off the ground to first level single large generous entrance, stair and lift (which only go from street level to podium). It will not be a sunny space (see below), but will be vibrant and a good social mixing point, the ideal place for "on the way" incidental playable landscape.
27. The two roof terraces are accessed off each of the two cores. They will both be very sunny, landscaped with a variety of destination leisure spaces including playspace, and benefit from splendid views including of Alexandra Palace, whilst being well over the rooftops of existing neighbouring houses (therefore being of no privacy/disturbance concern). As they are laid out with one lift and stair core accessing each terrace, they could be managed separately, if each core is separately managed with separate entrance controls, or could both be accessible to all residents if both cores are accessible to all residents or if the access deck at this level are made

to run through between both cores. Both arrangements, where all residents can use both terraces, or where only those residents off each core can use each terrace, would be policy compliant, since housing policy accommodates the request of many affordable housing providers to have separate cores for separate management issues.

Privacy / Overlooking of Proposed Residents and Existing Neighbours

28. There are only minor concerns at privacy or overlooking of existing neighbours directly facing windows in the development. All neighbours are on the other side of streets; there are no cases where this development is looking at the back gardens and rear elevations of houses, where residents would have a greater reasonable expectation of privacy, except in the case of the flank view of no 86 Mayes Road, across Caxton Road. In this one case, that rear elevation is already visible from Caxton Road itself, and benefits from significant screening from existing trees, which will also screen those dwellings from this development.
29. Distance provides further privacy, given that the human face cannot be recognised over 18m away, so that a distance of 20m+ is considered to provide adequate privacy. The width of the surrounding streets provide additional privacy to existing neighbours from this development, as Mayes Road is well over 20m wide, with the existing houses set back further behind front gardens, and although Caxton Road is slightly under 20m wide, the existing houses are well set back behind long front gardens of a further 10m+ length.
30. Within the development, most of the proposed habitable rooms face out, away from each other; only those that face into the central courtyard will be able to look at each other. These will inevitably lose privacy from neighbours using the access balconies, although the courtyard's width, at over 20m, and the placing of non residential close to the internal corners on one side of each corner, means they will not overlook between residents' windows. Privacy is improved by moving the access balconies away from the face of the building, and adding planting beds, but it has to be recognised that the affected windows are in all cases kitchens or second bedrooms, never living rooms, and that people passing will always be transitory, not prolonged.
31. With regards to privacy from the public realm, the whole of the residential accommodation is raised up at at least 1st floor level, with on the southeast side, at least at 2nd floor level, so there will be no loss of privacy to residents from the street, or even from the ramp to the car park, which will always be below window sill levels of adjacent flats, with flats facing the ramp at the lowest applicable levels being carefully designed to have their primary windows facing away from or being well above the ramp.

Daylight and Sunlight

32. Of relevance to this section, Haringey policy in the DM DPD DM1 requires that:

"...D Development proposals must ensure a high standard of privacy and amenity for the development's users and neighbours. The council will support proposals that:

- a. Provide appropriate sunlight, daylight and open aspects (including private amenity spaces where required) to all parts of the development and adjacent buildings and land;*
- b. Provide an appropriate amount of privacy to their residents and neighbouring properties to avoid overlooking and loss of privacy detrimental to the amenity of neighbouring residents and residents of the development..."*

33. The applicants provided Daylight and Sunlight Report on their proposals and of the effect of their proposals on neighbouring dwellings. These have been prepared fully in accordance with council policy following the methods explained in the Building Research Establishment's publication "Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight – A Guide to Good Practice" (2nd Edition, Littlefair, 2011), known as "The BRE Guide".
34. The assessment finds that the impact of the development on existing neighbouring residential properties is generally favourable for both daylight and sunlight, with only six neighbouring existing residential properties found to lose a noticeable amount of daylight, and no neighbours losing a noticeable amount of sunlight. The six properties that would lose a noticeable amount of daylight to any of their windows are no 3 Caxton Road (to one window), no. 1 Caxton (2 windows), no. 86 Mayes Road (to 3 windows; these 3 properties being opposite the site over

Caxton Road), and to 63-67 Mayes (neighbouring houses opposite the site over Mayes Road; to 13 of 16 windows).

35. In all cases these houses or flats are at least dual aspect (no 86 is triple aspect), with their other aspects unaffected, and they currently benefit from the highly unusual situation of having a vacant site opposite them. All the affected windows would retain Vertical Sky Components (VSC) of over 20%, where 27% is the recommended level in the BRE Guide, and levels over 20% are considered good the losses are generally only to 60 or 70% of their current value (where 80% is considered not noticeable), only one as low as 50%, and generally their No Sky Line (NSL) does still meet the BRE Guide recommended levels.
36. The applicants' assessment also finds the proposals would achieve good levels of daylight to the proposed dwellings. They find that all the Living Rooms meet the standard recommended in the BRE Guide, including all the open plan Living/Dining/Kitchens meeting the higher kitchen standard, 90% of bedrooms meeting the bedroom standard, and only the separate kitchens not meeting the BRE daylight standard. For sunlight where the BRE Guide standard applies only to living rooms facing within 90° of due south; all those meet the standard, but they point out that 69% of living rooms do not face south. It is worth pointing out that in all flats where their living room does not face within 90° of due south, they will have other rooms that do face within 90° of due south, and that all residents have access to outdoor amenity spaces, some of which will get very large amounts of sunlight.
37. In the case of the outdoor amenity spaces, two of the spaces, the two roof terraces, receive exceptionally high levels of sunlight, with just the central podium courtyard not meeting the BRE Guide standard. This space was never likely to be a sunny space, and it is not unreasonable in a development with a variety of external amenity spaces for one of the three to be a more shady space, especially as this space will have busy circulation crossing it; with all residents entering it before going into their flats or up to their floor, and it being likely to receive a lot of artificial light spillage (unlike the two roof terraces).
38. In the case of higher density developments, it should be noted that the BRE Guide itself states that it is written with low density, suburban patterns of development in mind and should not be slavishly applied to more urban locations; as in London, the Mayor of London's Housing SPG acknowledges. In particular, the 27% VSC recommended guideline is based on a low density suburban housing model and in an urban environment it is recognised that VSC values in excess of 20% are considered as reasonably good, and that VSC values in the mid-teens are deemed acceptable. Paragraph 2.3.29 of the GLA Housing SPD supports this view as it acknowledges that natural light can be restricted in densely developed parts of the city. Therefore, full or near full compliance with the BRE Guide is not to be expected and the fact that it is very nearly achieved here is considered an excellent performance.

Conclusions

39. This is a challenging site, with a number of constraints from existing neighbours and potential surrounding developments, and a certain uncertainty as to what its eventual neighbours to the east will be. However the proposals have managed triumphantly to devise a scheme that could sit within the site as it is at present, provide an encouragement to improvements to the neighbours, especially the potential for opening up the dead and underused spaces and sides of The Mall and still accommodate longer term future plans.
40. The proposed accommodation would provide good quality homes, with access to good quality private amenity space, and high levels of privacy, sunlight and daylight, which is impressive especially in the context of this becoming part of the town centre of Muswell Hill. At the same time, the proposals promise to provide good quality workspace and retail ground floor uses, including part 2 storey, and including the interesting and promising yard space idea for the potentially awkward space between the development and the space beside and underside of the ramp. The architectural form, composition and materials also promised to be of a high quality and appropriate to the location and context.

Richard Truscott

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18/06/2020