

Allies and Morrison

85 Southwark Street
London SE1 0HX

telephone +44 20 7921 0100
web alliesandmorrison.com
email studio@alliesandmorrison.com

4th July 2018

Fiona Dunning
Wallfields, Pegs Lane
Hertford
SG13 8EQ

Dear Fiona

NORTHGATE END 3/18/0432/FUL RESPONSE TO PLANNING COMMITTEE'S COMMENTS 20 JUNE 2018

This is a response to the comments raised by the Committee on 20 June 2018 with regards to planning application Reference 3/18/0432/FUL.

1. The provision of Affordable Homes

Members commented on the level of Affordable Housing proposed

The applicant has considered carefully the comments of the Committee with regards to the 20% Affordable Housing provision. Given the viability assessment provided with the planning application, the applicant's view is that the current provision is justified in accordance with policy on the basis of the overall viability of the scheme and particularly the costs associated with delivery of the new car park and significant town centre regeneration benefits (see point 7 below).

However, since the Committee meeting, Hertfordshire LEP has awarded a £6m grant and a £3.6m interest-free loan to East Herts Council for the Old River Lane site. This funding from the Government's Single Local Growth Fund will be used to support the enabling development at Northgate End as well as to facilitate land assembly for the whole Old River Lane scheme. Given the support from the LEP and that East Herts Council is now expected to deliver the proposed development, it is willing to increase the overall Affordable Housing provision up to 40% by offering an additional three affordable homes. These would be low cost home ownership units which could assist local first time buyers and/or those on lower incomes to step onto the housing ladder. The second floor will accommodate these low cost homes.

2. Noise assessment matters

Members noted the lack of time for officers to consider the latest applicant's statement, ahead of the Committee meeting, in relation to the concerns raised by Environmental Health.

Feedback from Environmental Health following the Committee meeting indicated that new background measurements at the right location would be preferable in order to ensure that the noise impact assessment is robust. The applicant is undertaking new measurements which will be provided in the following days.

3. The specification of the proposed MUGA

Members commented on the specification of the MUGA and questioned whether it was meeting Sport England requirements.

Great efforts have been made to find the best fit for an improved MUGA that meets Sport England requirements with 2m runoff areas, within the red line of the planning application, to compensate Northgate Centre for the loss of the outdoor space, whilst ensuring that this was not to the detriment of Yew Tree Place.

An updated drawing showing the modified location of the MUGA and elevations of the acoustic barrier are provided with this note at **Appendix A**. Some trees may need to be removed to avoid trees overhanging the MUGA and such trees have been highlighted in red in the drawing. Further landscape changes may be required subject to the layout of the MUGA in addition to addressing HCC concerns regarding sight lines and encroachment/overhanging onto HCC land.

Discussions with HCC Property have followed the Committee meeting. The inclusion of runoffs within the fence was tested by the architects. Two different MUGA sketch options are included at **Appendix B**, these were initially developed with different orientations:

1. Narrow end towards boundary with Yew Tree Place
2. Long end towards boundary with Yew Tree Place - rotated 90 degrees

HCC's preference, based on the initial sketches was for the MUGA to be positioned with the narrow end towards the boundary with Yew Tree Place. However HCC noted that it would ideally move further east to create a buffer between the MUGA and neighbours. This may also present the opportunity to develop a more suitable design for the setting.

However, following a re-assessment of the options by the design team option 1 was not achievable due to the space required for the acoustic barrier, which was recommended by the noise consultant and Environmental Health.

With regards to the acoustic barrier HCC stated that they have not been consulted on it and would want the time to fully explore what options might be available to ensure the most effective solution to support service delivery. HCC also suggested that if the MUGA could be moved further to the east there may be other options to the suggested barrier.

The applicant is open to explore the opportunity of finding a better location for the MUGA that benefits Northgate Centre users as well as Yew Tree Place, subject to an agreement with the land owner of the area east of the proposed development. This would require a new planning application for the MUGA.

East Herts intends to work closely with HCC on the delivery of a scheme that is beneficial to all stakeholders involved.

MUGA planning conditions

The applicant would like to invite the Planning Authority to consider the following operational details of the current services offered at Northgate Centre when assessing the relevant conditions proposed with regards to the proposals:

- a) HCC Property confirm that the external area to the rear of the Northgate Centre is an integral part of the public service provision offered by HCC. Northgate Centre is the East Herts district hub site and key to local public service delivery.
- b) The proposed MUGA is to partly compensate for the loss of the grassed area and will continue to be managed by HCC for the benefit of the public service and other groups who may hire the centre.
- c) All groups of the Northgate Centre have access to the entire outside grassed area throughout the year and at all times. The outside space is used by most groups at some point during their programme. Some of the outdoor activities are planned in advance, whilst others on the day, weather permitting.
- d) Current programmes cater for small and larger groups up to 150 participants. HCC does not envisage any change to the way it operates and numbers of users.
- e) The centre is open all year, 9am to 10pm Monday to Friday and some weekends. No change in operating hours is envisaged for the district hub facility.
- f) HCC Property find the proposed condition of restricting use to 7pm unacceptable as this will prevent effective delivery of public services and would represent a further major change to the hub facility that has not been part of any previous discussions.
- g) HCC Property confirm that there is some external lighting already on site, some on timers. This could be improved with more modern, energy efficient products and would have been addressed as part of the ongoing, phased improvements planned for the site as S106 funding became available. New directional lighting can minimise impact on the neighbours and improves usability and safety of the outside areas.
- h) The proposed MUGA and access walk way are within the HCC site. HCC has requested that the design for access to the site, walkway and MUGA all include gates/fencing to secure the site and for ease of management.
- i) It will continue to be the responsibility of HCC to manage and operate the site and therefore no management plan is required.
- j) The site is not currently open to the general public and will not be in the future.

4. The extent of provision of electric vehicle charging points to be installed

Members questioned the recommended level of electric charging points in the car park

The applicant would like to note that currently electric vehicles (EV) only make up a very small % of all vehicles on UK roads and about 2% of new cars sold. With this in mind for the 581 space proposed at Northgate End approximately just under 12 should be EV. Hence the original suggestion of 12 spaces with 6 dual charge points. Highways recommended 20 charge points – which as they would normally be dual, would serve 40 vehicles. This figure would appear to be more than adequate for the current time and also give some level of future proofing.

However, it is expected that over the life of the car park the number of EV vehicles will increase, ultimately very considerably and it was for this reason that it was suggested that future proofing for EV provision at Northgate End be ensured. Namely by ensuring adequate power supply and in particular oversized ducting between decks so that more charge points can be added as necessary in the future.

Multi-storey car parks are probably one of the easiest facilities in which to extend EV charge points as ground works are not required and the walls can be used for unit mounting and/or cable runs assuming an appropriate building design along with EV bay location in the first instance.

The difficulty in providing too many charge points at the outset results in the appearance of too many empty spaces which cannot be used by other vehicles and also runs the risk that in a few years' time as technology moves on, the current charger unit /sockets may be obsolete as they are overtaken by revised specifications given that the charger market and the EV market generally is still evolving. It also may mean that power supply demands do not need to be unnecessarily tied up until they are actually required.

Currently there are some 358 EVs registered in East Herts. Whilst currently relatively small the number is growing steadily.

5. The proposed hours of use of the car park

Members noted that the recommended hours of use didn't allow for the car park to support the upcoming development at Old River Lane.

The applicant agrees with Members comments on the need for the car park to support to the Old River Lane development. It would be appropriate to address any operational details of the proposed car park, including the opening hours, in a management plan to be agreed with the Planning Authority. However extending the closing time (no entry) to midnight would be a reasonable compromise.

6. The scale of pedestrian movements to and from the proposed car park and how they will be accommodated in relation to crossing Link Road

Please refer to point 4.4 pages 17-19 in the TA Addendum for full details on the assessed Pedestrian Demand in relation to the proposed car park.

7. The relationship of the proposal to wider development of land to the south of Link Road (Old River Lane)

The Northgate End area forms an integral part of the Old River Lane scheme. The concept masterplan indicating the land use for the wider site was approved at Full Council on 13th December 2017.



Northgate End is physically separate from the main site – and with the need to deliver a car park first to unlock the main Old River Lane site – this creates a distinct delivery phase, hence the submission of the planning application for this area. The applicant therefore is pursuing this as a separate development package to facilitate dialogue with the developers for a 'released' ORL site.

The phasing of the wider ORL scheme is:

- Phase 1 - Demolition of No 1 The Causeway – *completed and providing temporary car parking spaces to mitigate loss of spaces if Phase 2 goes ahead.*
- Phase 2 – Northgate End development – *planning application submitted*
- Phase 3 – Old River Lane development – *drafting specification*

The applicant is not promoting the Northgate End development as a standalone development. The applicant intends to secure progress on the dialogue with developers on the core site prior to construction works for the delivery of the car park.

I trust this briefing note addresses all the points raised at the Committee meeting, but please feel free to request any further information that might be needed.

Yours Sincerely

John Fannon
Allies and Morrison

Cc Anjeza Saliaj, Project Manager, Communications Strategy and Policy, East Herts Council
Vicky Thornton, Allies and Morrison
James Falconer, Allies and Morrison