

## **Charlton Liberal Club, 59C Charlton Church Lane, London SE7 7AB**

### **Demolition of existing building and erection of 3-storey building accommodating five 2-bed flats and one 3-bed flat.**

#### **The Proposal**

1. It is proposed to demolish a two-storey building, of little architectural merit, and replace it with a 3-storey building of much greater visual interest; one with a design and form and external features that would properly integrate into its period-age setting. The existing post war building has a box-like appearance with an overlying mansard roof and is a completely incongruous piece of infill, totally at odds with the local vernacular. The proposed replacement building would, instead, be hip-roofed, reflecting that of No 59, an early Victorian villa.
2. The land slopes upwards to the south and, as a result the new building's eaves and ridge would be below that of No 61, an Edwardian dwelling, although there would be a rough eaves alignment with No 59. The CGIs show that the depth of the upper floor windows at this property have been used as a reference point for the proposed fenestration.
3. The new building's front building line would follow that of No 59, but would be set significantly behind that of No 61 whose relative footprint is angled. Accordingly, No 59C's front elevation would be juxtaposed against No 61's tall flank. At the rear a three-storey projection, in common with the physical arrangement to the rear of No 59, is proposed. Apart from at ground floor level no windows would be present in either of the projection's flank walls.
4. To give the impression of physical separation from No 59, a recessed section of mirrored glass rising from the building's base to eaves level would be installed, whilst space would exist between the footprints of the new building and No 61.
5. The new building's depth would be set in from the rear building line of No 59, but would be deeper than that of No 61.
6. The elevations would show a mix of brick and render, with a central recess on the front elevation at first and second floor levels. To the rear separate sections of external terrace would complement both flats 1 and 2, whilst rear facing balconies would serve the upper floor units.
7. The 2-bed flats, with gross internal floor areas measuring between 61 and 66 sqms, and the 3-bed unit at 90 sqm, would satisfy the internal space standards, both in terms of the London Plan 2021 and the Nationally described matrix. All flats would be dual aspect.
8. Obscured glazed screening would be installed at particular points to protect the amenities of the neighbouring occupiers at Nos 59 and 61 (see Drawing no 2004\_02\_08 Rev B).
9. The existing forecourt would not be utilised for car parking purposes; cycle storage facilities are shown to the rear of the building, with bin storage to the front, close to the boundary with No 59.

#### **Relevant Planning history**

10. In May 2021 Royal Borough of Greenwich refused planning permission (ref 21/0457/F) for 'Demolition of existing building (over basement) with accommodation in the roofspace for the

provision of replacement social club at basement level, 6 apartments, associated refuse facilities, car and cycle parking'. The Reasons for Refusal cited are as follows:

1. *By reason of the partial loss of the existing community use as a social club (Use Class F2(b)), which has not been sufficiently justified, would result in harm to the provision of community uses within the immediate vicinity and the borough as a whole. As such, the proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies GG1, GG5 and S1 of the London Plan (2021) and Policies CH1 and CH(a) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies July (2014).*
  2. *By reason of the partial loss of the existing community use as a social club (Use Class F2(b)), which has not been sufficiently justified, would result in harm to the provision of employment generating uses within the immediate vicinity and the borough as a whole. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policy EA(a) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies July (2014).*
  3. *By reason of the location of the access to the proposed social club, which would be shared with an existing residential flat at no.59 would result in unacceptable noise and disturbance for the occupiers within the basement flat within 59 Charlton Church Lane and those within the immediate vicinity of the application site. As such, the proposal would be contrary to Policy D14 of the London Plan (2021) and Policies DH(b) and E(a) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies (adopted July 2014).*
  4. *The development, by virtue of the poor outlook and daylight and sunlight which would be received in the single bedrooms within units 2, 4 and 6 and the lack of privacy and noise and disturbance occupiers of units 1 and 2 would be subjected to at the front of the site, the development would provide an unacceptable standard of residential accommodation, contrary to London Plan (2021) Policies D6 and D14 and Policies E(a) and H5 of the Core Strategy (2014) and the Mayor's Housing SPG (2016).*
  5. *The development, by virtue of its excessive scale, footprint, inappropriate architectural form and fenestration, as well as the proximity to the adjacent properties, would appear overly dominant and incongruous in the streetscene and would result in an uncharacteristic terracing effect on Charlton Church Lane. As such the development would not accord with the prevailing pattern of development in the area and would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the streetscene, contrary to Policies D3 and D4 of the London Plan (2021) and Policies DH1 and H(c) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies (adopted July 2014).*
  6. *The proposed on-site car parking provision constitutes an over-provision which would undermine strategic aims to reduce private car ownership and promote sustainable forms of transport. As such the proposal would be contrary to Policies T2, T4, T6 and T6.1 of the London Plan (2021) and Policies IM4 and IM(c) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies (adopted July 2014).*
11. It should be noted that the above application was conceived as a response to the Council refusing an application in 2020 (ref 20/1370/F) for the conversion of the existing building into six flats, involving side, rear and roof extensions. The Council's Reasons for Refusal here related to:
- the loss of the liberal club (termed a "community facility" by the Council);
  - the loss of "the employment generating D2 use of the site"

- a considered unacceptable loss of outlook and increased sense of enclosure for the occupiers of both Nos 59 and 61;
  - a lack of private external amenity space, poor daylight and sunlight entry to some of the proposed flats, along with a resultant lack of privacy and noise disturbance to the detriment of future occupiers;
  - the extended building would be considered inappropriate due to an excessive scale, footprint and architectural form, also resulting in a terracing effect; and
  - an over-provision of car parking to the front of the property, along with concerns as to the siting of the bin store.
12. It is now accepted that an attempt to retain some of the social club would have not worked with its proximity to the intended residential flats. Further, in addressing the likely impact on the occupiers of the neighbouring properties, it had been decided that the best approach was the site's redevelopment. However, given that the subsequent application was also refused, for the six reasons set out earlier, it was decided that a new building, more in keeping with the surroundings, and better designed for the benefit of the flats' future occupants, was required. The development has been made car-free and, importantly, the social club, due to its inviability which caused its closure, has been completely dispensed with.
13. Hence the newly proposed, and radically different scheme which this Supporting Statement serves to promote.

### **Location**



14. The following points should be noted:
- Photographs 1 and 2 below show a mixture of residential and commercial properties; the latter on the west side of Charlton Church Lane, with a five-storey Edwardian landmark building on the corner of Wellington Mansions. On the opposite side of the street, where No 59C is



situated, the graduating heights of the Victorian villas further up the hill respond to the topography of the land.

- Photo 1 is taken looking down the Charlton Church Lane hill towards the site, and photo 2, with the site just hidden behind the tree to the left, is looking back up the hill.





- Further north along Charlton Church Lane are restaurants whilst, close by in The Village, are the Bugle Horn and White Swan public houses. The Meridian Sports & Social Club, which hires out function space and pitches is also situated nearby along Charlton Park Lane. Charlton Athletic's football ground is also within walking distance.
- Charlton Church Lane has kerbside parking restrictions, given that it is located within the Charlton Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) which operates between 9am and 6.30pm, Monday to Saturday. However, the application site has a high PTAL rating of '5', being only 2 mins walk from Charlton train Station, and also that nine bus routes run along Charlton Church Lane. This indicates that the site is within a highly accessible location.



Photo 3 shows the view of the premises from the opposite side of Charlton Church Lane.



Photo 4 shows a slightly context along the east side of the street.



Photo 5 – (Front elevation - CGI 1)



Photo 6 – (CGI 2)





Photo 7 (CGI 3)



Photo 8 (Rear elevation - CGI 4)

### **Planning policies**

15. The local development plan comprises the London Plan (March 2021) and the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies (2014).
16. The government's National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) is also a material consideration in the determination of proposals for development.

### **London Plan**

17. Relevant policies therefrom are as follows:

**Policy GG2 – 'Making the best use of land'** - decisions should enable the development of brownfield land, prioritise sites which are well-connected by existing public transport and proactively explore the potential to intensify the use of land to support additional homes.

**Policy D3 – 'Optimising site capacity through the design-led Approach'** – the form and layout of new development should enhance local context by delivering buildings that positively respond to local distinctiveness through their layout, orientation, scale, appearance and shape. Active frontages are encouraged, with high quality architecture that contributes to local character.

**Policy D4 – 'Delivering good design'** – the qualitative aspects of the development design should be scrutinised.

**Policy D5 – 'Inclusive design'** – development should achieve the highest standards of accessible and inclusive design.

**Policy D6 – 'Housing quality standards'** – development should comply with Table 3.1 of the Plan, relating to minimum space standards for new dwellings

**Policy H1 – ‘Increasing Housing Supply’**

**Policy H2 – ‘Small Sites’**– boroughs should pro-actively support well-designed new homes on small sites

**Policy H10 – ‘Housing Size Mix’** – schemes should generally consist of a range of unit sizes

**Policy T5 – ‘Cycling’** – developments should provide appropriate levels of cycle parking.

**Policy T6 – ‘Car parking’** – car parking should be restricted in line with levels of existing and future public transport accessibility and connectivity.

**Policy T6.1 – ‘Residential parking’** – new residential development should not exceed the Plan’s maximum parking standards.

**Greenwich Local Plan**

18. Relevant policies therefrom are as follows:

**Policy H2 – ‘Housing Mix’** – requiring a mix of housing types and sizes

**Policy H5 – ‘Housing Design’** – requiring for a high quality design

**Policy H(c) – ‘Backland and Infill development’** – residential development on infill sites will only be favourably considered where, most relevantly in this instance, there would be no unreasonable loss of privacy to neighbouring properties, and the character of the area is maintained with particular regard to the scale, design and density of the development.

**Policy EA(a) – ‘Local Employment Sites’** – Non employment uses will only be permitted on vacant employment sites where it can be demonstrated that the site is unsuitable for any employment generating use, and marketing on fair price and terms for at least two years indicates there is no realistic prospect of any form of employment arising.

**Policy DH1 – ‘Design’** – high quality design should ensure that development positively contributes to the improvement of the built environment.

**Policy DH(b) – ‘Protection of Amenity of Adjacent Occupiers’** – applications will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the proposed development would not cause an unacceptable loss of amenity to adjacent occupiers by reducing the amount of daylight, sunlight or privacy enjoyed.

**Policy CH(a) – ‘Loss of Community Facilities’** – existing social and community facilities will be protected. Planning permission involving the loss of such facilities will only be granted where:

- there is evidence that the loss would not create or add to a shortfall in provision for the specific community use;
- alternative community facilities of a similar nature are provided locally in the area which that facility serves; and
- the site is demonstrably unsuitable for continued use as a community facility.



**Policy IM(b) – ‘Walking and Cycling’** – new development should provide cycle parking in accordance with the borough’s standards.

**Policy IM(c) – ‘Parking Standards’** – developments supported by a high level of public transport accessibility and within Controlled Parking Zones should be car free.

## **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

19. The most relevant advice is contained in the following paragraphs:

**Para 60** – confirms the government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes.

**Para 69** – says that small sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area.

**Para 110** – concerns the provision of sustainable transport and that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users.

**Para 119** – says that planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land.

**Para 120(c)** – says that decisions should give substantial value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes.

**Para 120(d)** – says that Council’s should promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing.

**Para 126** – stresses the importance of high quality design.

**Para 130** – says that planning decisions should function well, be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping, and should be sympathetic to local character and history whilst not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change. It also advises that the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development should be optimised.

**Para 134** – says that significant weight should be given to innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.

## **Assessment of the proposal**

### **Loss of the Social Club**

20. To accompany both planning applications 20/1370/F and 21/0457/F a letter from Acorn (Commercial, Investment & Development) agents dated 26<sup>th</sup> June 2020 was submitted. It said that, as the former Liberal Club had been in considerable debt it had been unviable for the facility to remain open. In fact, the Club had ceased trading several years previously due to significant depleting membership from demographic changes. Several attempts to sell the freehold and leasehold interest as an ongoing concern had proved unsuccessful. In the circumstances Acorn

had been instructed by the trustees of the former Liberal Club to sell the property on an unconditional basis, and marketing was undertaken in the early months of 2020.

21. The letter indicates that there was no interest expressed from potential purchasers as to the reinstatement of a Class D2 commercial use given that the demand for such in the locality is “slim” whereas the demand for residential flats outstrips the limited supply.
22. A copy of the letter is provided as **Appendix A**.
23. The property was then subsequently re-marketed by the current owner between the months of March and July 2021, and a second letter from Acorn, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2021 explains the outcome of the exercise. The main points put forward are as follows:
  - the new exercise included a circular around Acorn’s database (of approximately 16,000 applicants, a listing on Acorn’s website, a listing on specialist commercial property portals (Zoopla, Estate Agents Clearing House, Movehut, Estates Gazette Property link and Commercial People) and directly calling/writing to likely tenants, and offering the property to them.
  - the initial guide price was £60,000 per annum, later reduced to £50,000 per annum, also available on flexible lease terms. This equates to a very low rental of £16 per sqft.
  - the recent marketing exercise gave rise to seven enquiries and three viewings, but there was no interest in reinstating the social club use.
24. A copy of the above letter, along with the marketing particulars are provided as **Appendix B**.
25. Although the Council, in its decision notice for 20/1370/F, stated that “*the principle of the change of use of the site to residential is considered unacceptable due to insufficient evidence to justify the loss of the community facility*” it is suggested that the Council here confused Local Plan policy CH(a) ‘Loss of Community facilities’, as cited in the relevant Refusal Reason, with the requirement in policy EA(b) ‘Loss of Pubs’ which indicates that the loss of pubs that have a community role will be resisted “*except where continued use as a pub is no longer economically viable. Evidence must be submitted to clearly demonstrate that reasonable attempts have been made to actively market the site as a pub for at least two years*”. In contrast, policy CH(a) does not require for such, with its proviso (iv) indicating that it should be demonstrated that the site “*is unsuitable for continued use as a community facility*”, evidence exists to show that the loss would not create or add to a shortfall in local provision, and that “*alternative community facilities of a similar nature*” are provided locally. For details of these, please refer to paragraph 14.
26. Another error is the Council, by way of its previous decisions for this site, regarding the Liberal Club as an employment use. An internal visit to the premises would have highlighted the limited scale of the use. Only a manager, supported by minimal bar staff, would have proved necessary to run the Club and, as such, policy EA(a), which is concerned with ‘Employment sites’ has been misapplied. Quite simply, given the circumstances, policy EA(a) is not relevant to the proposal.
27. The Liberal Club therefore remains closed, with the premises derelict. Given the clear lack of interest from anyone wishing to reintroduce a community facility and, with the neighbouring properties being in residential use the prospect of noise and disturbance arising to the detriment of neighbouring occupiers in the unlikely event that the premises were re-used for such, it is strongly suggested that a pragmatic approach be taken and the site be redeveloped solely for residential purposes, as is proposed. This would secure the removal of an unprepossessing building and its replacement with one much more visually pleasing and sympathetic to its surroundings.

28. Accordingly, the loss of the facility should not discourage the principle of the development and its acceptability.

### **Design, standard of accommodation, and visual appearance, of the new building**

29. Firstly, the proposal would bring a brownfield site that contains a derelict building back into a beneficial use. The proposed new building has been designed, not only to make optimum use of the site, but to integrate well within its contextual setting. Following the front building line of No 59, it would also reflect its eaves height. Moreover, the proposed building's form and design would hold visual interest, and would dispense with a building that can only be considered as a very poor example of infill.

30. Notwithstanding the proposed scheme satisfying the London Plan's adopted internal space standards for new residential units, including the provision of internal storage space for each flat, the Plan also mentions that qualitative aspects of a development are key to ensuring successful sustainable housing. The two ground floor flats would benefit from the provision of private, screened, and usable terrace areas immediately outside the units, whereas the four upper floor flats would all have rear facing balconies.

31. A grassed lawn area would be provided to the rear of the building.

32. In terms of the scheme's qualitative design, significant points to note are:

- The built form, massing and height of the development is appropriate for its surrounding context;
- The proposed site layout, orientation and design of the individual dual aspect flats would provide privacy and adequate daylight for future residents;
- The refuse storage facilities, to be sited on the front forecourt, would be convenient in their location and operation, working effectively for both the residents and collection services. It would also be screened by means of soft planting;
- The design has been developed in accordance with BS 8300: 2009 Design of Buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people - Code of Practice, adheres to the Disability Discrimination Act for the provision of all public spaces, and includes the following features:
  - All entrance door sets would have a minimum of 110mm structural openings and a 1500mm diameter arch would be provided inside each flat entrance;
  - All corridors would have widths in excess of 900mm, and would be free of obstructions;
  - The layout of the new flats have been designed to Lifetime Homes standards.
- In terms of the flats themselves the design involves the provision of level access to all flats, and bathrooms having potential to be adapted to accommodate shower/wet rooms, if required, given the intended 1,500mm manoeuvring zone. This is best illustrated by the annotations on Drawing no 2004\_02\_09.

33. Details of external materials, particular elevational features and treatments are highlighted in Drawing no 2004\_02-10 Rev B, indicating that careful consideration has gone into the design process. A design led approach, as advocated by the relevant policies in both the London Plan and the Local Plan, and also advocated by the NPPF, has been followed. This has resulted in a proposal for an attractive and workable development.



## Effect on neighbouring properties

34. As mentioned the depth of the new building, whilst less than No 59, would exceed that of No 61. Drawings 2004\_02\_02 Rev B (first floor layout) and 2004\_02\_02b Rev B (second floor) show the physical relationship between the two buildings' footprints. It can be seen that a 45 degree line taken from the central point on No 61's upper floor window would not cut the new building's rear limit whereas, although a 45 degree line projected from No 61's inset window would cut the building, this is consistent with the current physical relationship. CGI 4, which shows all three properties perfectly illustrates the proposed arrangement.
35. Drawing no 2004\_02\_08 shows the new building's flank elevations and the relative profiles. No flank wall windows, apart from at ground floor level, would face towards No 61. Towards the common boundary with No 61 timber fencing would surround the new building and, at the rear, where an external terrace is proposed, an existing brick wall would be overlain by an obscurely glazed screen to prevent the occupiers of No 61 being overlooked.
36. At the rear elevation the balconies serving the upper floor flats would have glass screens attached to a height of 1.1m. In terms of the relationship with No 59, whilst the frontage would show a recessed mirror to give the appearance of the two buildings being separated, a similar recess at the rear would show that the buildings are joined. Vertically profiled windows within this section of the new building would be fixed below 1.8m from floor height, but openable above this point for ventilation purposes.
37. It is considered that the mitigation measures described would both protect the amenities of the neighbouring occupiers, thereby satisfying the aims of Local Plan policy DH(b), whilst not compromising future occupiers' enjoyment of the flats created.
38. In terms of the protection of residential amenities the applicant has also drawn up and signed a Unilateral Undertaking confirming that the property's basement, which will still exist will, at no time in the future, be re-used as a social club or for the sale and consumption of drinks, alcoholic or otherwise, on the premises.

## Traffic considerations

39. The case report for the previous application (ref. 21/0457/F) lists the comments of the local highway authority to the then proposed scheme. These mention the CPZ location and indicates that on-street parking is already at a premium. The comments then state:

*"It is therefore recommended that if the proposal were to be allowed that it does not impact on existing residents, and this can be achieved by creating a car free development. This can be provided by amending the existing Traffic Order (at developer expense) controlling the CPZ to ensure no future occupiers are eligible for parking permits as any additional demand will create parking problems for existing residents and businesses in the area. The existing vehicular access will require alteration by the council at developer expense and an informative should be placed on any permission to consult, accordingly. It is recommended that adequate cycle provision is made in line with the Publication version London Plan standard. Subject to the above being secured by condition no highway objection is raised".*

40. The newly proposed scheme has therefore adopted this approach. Given the high PTAL rating of 5, the proximity to Charlton train station, and the bus routes along Charlton Church Lane, it is intended that the development should be car-free, allowing for the forecourt to represent a threshold with appropriate landscaping. Six cycle storage spaces (one per flat) would be provided to the rear (see Drawing no 2004\_02\_101 Rev B).

41. The scheme would thereby accord with the objectives of London Plan policies T5, T6 and T6.1, and also Local Plan policies IM(b) and IM(c).

### **Conclusion**

42. It has been demonstrated that the proposed development is fully policy compliant, and constitutes the redevelopment and optimum and beneficial use of a brownfield site for residential purposes. It is thereby considered that there are no material grounds to withhold planning permission, and it is requested that permission be granted, accordingly.