



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 December 2017

by Rory MacLeod BA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1st February 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/E5330/W/17/3183738

Land bounded by Old Stable Row, Woolwich New Road, Woolwich, SE18 6JR

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Meyer Homes against the decision of Royal Borough of Greenwich Council.
 - The application Ref 17/0681/F, dated 28 February 2017, was refused by notice dated 30 June 2017.
 - The development proposed is the erection of temporary hoarding to a height of 2.4m along the perimeter of the development site [known as Phase 3 of the Woolwich Centre proposals].
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Meyer Homes against the Royal Borough of Greenwich Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area having regard to its height and extent and the reasonableness of the requested time period for display of the hoarding.

Reasons

4. The appeal relates to an open land parcel within Woolwich Town Centre that has been subject to temporary landscape measures pending the site's development in accordance with plans for the regeneration of the area. The site presently comprises a mounded grassed area bounded by small trees and traversed by paths. It is an attractive open space and at the time of my site visit was crossed by many people as a complementary feature to the adjacent pedestrian routes.
5. The proposal is for the erection of a 2.4m high temporary hoarding around the perimeter of the application site. The hoarding would be painted light green and form the backdrop for seven 8.4m long di-bond panels to accommodate a variety of artwork collected from local schools and also photos of Woolwich landmarks.

6. The appellant states that the securing of the site by a hoarding is necessary in the interests of the health and safety of members of the public whilst intrusive site investigations are undertaken ahead of the site's development. The site works are to investigate and mitigate the risk of contamination and to understand the sub-surface and ground water conditions, partly in relation to a back-filled well, and to enable a precise piling and drainage strategy to be provided. The hoarding is sought for a period of 12 months by which time it is anticipated that full redevelopment proposals will have come forward. A planning application for the development of the site has been submitted.
7. The appeal application was refused for four reasons. These essentially relate to the visual impact of the hoarding on this part of Woolwich town centre in general and specifically to the relationship with General Gordon Square and to the pedestrian link Love Lane. The Council is concerned that the whole of the site would be contained by the hoarding, that the period of consent sought is excessive, and that the vitality of the centre would be affected as a consequence of the prolonged erection of the hoarding.
8. The site is large, approximately 0.36 hectares in area, and the hoarding would be a conspicuous feature viewed from many directions. General Gordon Square is an attractively landscaped open area, slightly larger in size and located to the north east of the site. Whilst the hoarding would be clearly visible from General Gordon Square, the two sites are visually and functionally separated by a busy road, Thomas Street. In this respect the site does not form an extension to General Gordon Square. The height of the hoarding at 2.4m would not restrict views of the higher buildings around the appeal site.
9. Love Lane is a busy pedestrian path linking a new Tesco store adjacent to the site's western boundary with General Gordon Square. There would remain a width of about 13m between the hoarding and the rear of the buildings in Wellington Street that abut Love Lane. Given this separation, the hoarding would not be an overbearing feature and Love Lane should continue to be a bustling thoroughfare.
10. The longest section of the hoarding would face the commercial premises on the opposite eastern side of Woolwich New Road. From here, the hoarding would appear as an extensive feature but it would not restrict views towards the higher buildings beyond the site. For pedestrians on the footways adjacent to the hoarding, the display of artwork would enhance its overall appearance and provide points of visual interest. Nonetheless, in comparison with the appearance of the present landscaped open space, the hoarding would present an extensive and relatively unattractive barrier to general permeability, the height of which would restrict visibility of the surrounding area and detract from the appearance of the street scene.
11. The site is part of a wider regeneration scheme within Woolwich Town Centre and would be bound by hoardings similar in height and extent for the duration necessary to complete an approved development. The proposed ground investigations are a necessary pre-requisite to enable building works to proceed. The appellant has detailed a 7 month programme for investigative works with an additional 5 months for the infill of boreholes and a contingency to allow for unexpected weather conditions. I consider the one year period sought for the hoarding to be reasonable in these circumstances. As the piling

and foundation preparation works would relate to the entire site, I also consider it appropriate for the entire site to be contained by the hoarding.

12. In the context of a necessary enclosure to enable the site's development, the detailed design, appearance, extent and temporary nature of the hoarding would be appropriate. But the proposal can be considered as a stand-alone scheme for the temporary hoarding of an area of open space. Whilst a planning application has been submitted to bring forward a development, I have no information on the determination of that application and there remains uncertainty on when any development would be able to proceed. Given that uncertainty and the general detrimental effect the hoarding would have on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, the planning balance weighs against the proposal at this time. Even with planning permission in place the appellant would have some discretion on when to commence work. The loss of the open space for a period longer than necessary and a prolonged enclosure of the site by the hoarding would detract from the character and appearance of the area.
13. As such, the proposal would conflict with Policies 7.4, 7.5 and 6.10 of the London Plan (2016) and Policies DH1, TC2 and IM4 of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan's Core Strategy and Detailed Policies (2014), which promote good design and encourage opportunities to enhance local character, the public realm and walking as a means of travel. The proposal would also be contrary to the aims of the Woolwich Town Centre SPD (2012) in these respects.
14. It is clear from the many representations on the proposal that the present open space at the site is an amenity appreciated by visitors to the town centre and by residents including children and that there is substantial objection to the deadening effect of the hoarding, particularly whilst there is no permission in place for the site's development. Some objectors are opposed to any development of the land, but I have no reason to disagree with the Council's view that the present landscaped arrangement is a temporary expedient until the detailed proposals for this phase of the town centre regeneration are implemented. The objections to the hoardings on other grounds raised in the representations, including possible graffiti and anti-social behaviour do not lead me to a different conclusion.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given and having regard to all matters raised the appeal is dismissed.

Rory MacLeod

INSPECTOR