

Barnet Local Plan Examination

Matter 9 – Parks and Open Spaces, Community Uses, Health and Wellbeing

Hearing Statement prepared on behalf of Marstead Living Limited

September 2022

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared by Avison Young on behalf of Marstead Living Limited/IBSA, the owners of the Watchtower House and Kingdom Hall (WTHKH) site in Mill Hill (site allocation ref. 49).
- 1.2 Marstead Living has recently submitted a planning application for the redevelopment of the WTHKH site for 185 homes, comprising 175 x Specialist Older Persons Housing (SOPH) units (use class C2) and 10 x conventional dwellings (use class C3) plus a community facility. The application is pending determination (ref. 22/0649/FUL).
- 1.3 This statement sets out our comments with respect to the issues and questions raised by the Inspectors regarding Matter 9, as relevant to our particular representations.

2. Question 2 – Policy CHW01 relates specifically to community infrastructure, in those respects:

g) Is the approach of Policy CHW01 to development (including change of use) that involves loss or replacement of community facilities, justified and otherwise consistent with national policy insofar as it seeks to guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services?

h) Are the Council's proposed modifications to introduce more flexibility with regard to loss of community facilities and to alter the approach to Assets of Community Value in Policy CHW01, necessary for soundness and would any other changes be required in those specific regards?

- 2.1 For the purposes of context, planning application ref. 22/0649/FUL seeks approval for the redevelopment of the WTHKH (site ref. 49) which includes the loss of an existing place of worship which has been replaced pursuant to a separate planning application as part of an estate rationalisation programme. In practice the existing building was historically used for conferences, lectures, volunteer training, congregation meetings, dinners/functions, and weddings. It functioned as a piece of infrastructure (or ancillary use) that supported the IBSA activities operating in/around Mill Hill, in that its primary purpose was to provide meeting/function space for Members based at these sites. The replacement facility is of better quality and better meets the locational needs of the users of the existing facility.

-
- 2.2 Policy CHW01 supports development that involves the loss or replacement of existing community facilities where a replacement facility is provided that is equivalent to or of better quality and meets the needs currently met by the existing facility.
- 2.3 With specific reference to the particular circumstances associated with Site Ref. 49, in order to avoid unnecessary uncertainty in the determination of applications, we consider that in order for the policy to be effective, the policy/supporting text should be modified to confirm that the loss of existing community infrastructure will be permitted in instances where this is replaced off-site (including out-of-borough) where this would better address specific community needs (including as part of an estate rationalisation strategy).
- 2.4 Without modification, the policy could unintentionally prejudice the delivery of otherwise appropriate redevelopment sites and jeopardise their ability to meet the identified needs of the Local Plan.
- 2.5 We set out below suggested modifications to Policy CHW01 (incorporating the Council's proposed modifications) which would resolve this issue (this is a refinement of the wording proposed in our Regulation 19 representations with new wording in red/deletions struck through):

"Development (including change of use) that involves the loss or replacement of existing community facilities / services will be permitted if:

- *A ~~the~~ replacement facility **is provided (either on site or in a suitable alternative location) which is equivalent to or of better quality and meets the needs currently met by the existing facility, or***
- *it has been demonstrated that the facility is no longer required in its current use and that it is not suitable and viable for any other forms of social infrastructure for which there is a defined current or future need identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.*

*In determining applications the Council will consider the loss of community facilities as part of a wider public service transformation plan **and/or other institution estate rationalisation programmes** which requires investment in modern, fit for purpose infrastructure and facilities."*

Avison Young

6th September 2022.