

# Former Hounslow House – London Road

## Neighbour workshop note – 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016

On 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016 the project team, working on behalf of Meyer Homes, hosted an informal workshop with members of the immediate community to discuss issues specifically relating to the Former Hounslow House site, London Road, Hounslow. Neighbours of the site were sent an invitation letter and asked to register for a place at the session in order to manage numbers. In total 13 individuals attended the event.

### 1. Workshop structure

The event was an informal workshop where attendees were encouraged to sit on two tables with members of the project team allocated to each table to help guide discussion. The workshop had a running time of approximately two hours between 7.00pm - 9.00pm. A proposed agenda was sent with the invitation to the meeting which set out the broad structure for discussion. The agenda was generally followed throughout the meeting to guide discussion. This was set out as:

- **7.00pm – 7.15pm: (1) Introduction**
  - Each team member introduced them self and their role
  - A brief overview of the objectives for the workshop was provided
- **7.15pm – 7.50pm: (2) The site today and recent history – *discussion on existing site***
  - Where do attendees live in relation to the site?
  - What is the attendee's relationship with the site?
  - What were the views on the previously approved Tesco scheme for the site?
  - What were the views on the refused Spenhill residential-led develop?

(Material used to guide this part of the discussion included an aerial of the site with previous built form; a simple massing diagram of the Tesco scheme; an aerial photo of the previous buildings on site; CGI images of the Tesco scheme; a simple massing diagram of the Spenhill scheme; CGI images of the Tesco scheme; a site analysis map showing key constraints of the site)

*7.50 – 8.00pm: Concluding remarks on the site today (each table reported back key points raised during discussion)*

- **8.00pm – 8.10pm: Presentation on current scheme**
  - A presentation was provided by PTEa (architects) using a number of plans as a guide to the emerging plans for the site
- **8.10pm – 8.45pm: (3) Emerging proposals – *discussion on early stage plans for the site***
  - We asked what attendees thought on the emerging concept
  - We asked what attendees thought on the overall emerging layout

(Materials used to guide this part of the discussion were a sketch view of the emerging plans for the site; a simple massing diagram of the current proposals; a 2D sketch site proposal plan showing layout and access points)

*8.45pm – 9.00pm: Concluding remarks for the proposal, general comments and next steps*

**Venue:** The neighbour workshop was hosted at The Hounslow Arts Centre, Paul Robeson Theatre, the Treaty Shopping Centre, High St., Hounslow, TW3 1ES.

## 1. Introduction

The project team introduced themselves to the attendees explaining their role. The purpose of the workshop and how it fitted into the planning process was explained at the outset. An overview of the agenda for the meeting was provided but was explained that the format would remain fluid throughout, to allow the opportunity for the attendees to guide discussion should they wish to concentrate on a particular area or topic.

## 2. The site today and recent history

Given the long history of potential development of the site, the discussion was generally broken down in a chronological order, with visual material of each previous scheme/built form on the site. The discussion was broadly on the following topics:

- **Former Hounslow House** – The previous built form on site had little impact on existing residents. The buildings were not obtrusive in terms of daylight/sunlight, they provided good wind shelter and more privacy along the boundary adjacent to North Drive. The former offices caused little noise impact to the neighbours and had been empty for a long time and eventually became target of squatters until it was demolished. Depending on where the attendee lived along North Drive there were differing views expressed. Aces Court was built when the seven storeys Hounslow House building was still on site, so the height which was established in this location was accepted. The industrial units, which previously existed on site, did not go all the way along the boundary with North Drive so there are approximately 4 or 5 properties which did not have any build form adjacent to their gardens.
- **Approved Tesco scheme** – There were a number of benefits highlighted of the Tesco scheme including its low rise nature. These plans were considered acceptable in terms of daylight/sunlight terms to the surrounding residents. Attendees broadly welcomed the plans as the improved retail offer would benefit the area. Proximity of the commercial refuse of the scheme and location of air-conditioning vents in relation to Aces Court did however cause some concern. There was a concern that these proposals would have resulted in a considerable increase in traffic.
- **Refused Spenhill residential-led scheme** – This scheme was broadly disliked by the attendees at this event. The 21 storey tower was seen to be completely out of keeping with the area and the design in general was not aesthetically pleasing. The built form of the refused scheme came too close to the boundary of Aces Court as well as London Road. There were also a lot of balconies and windows proposed which would have faced onto Aces Court/North Drive potentially affecting privacy. The townhouse aspect of these proposals was welcomed and a “house to house” relationship on this boundary was seen as appropriate.
- **Current cleared site** – The current clear site results in poor security for residents of North Drive – one house had been broken into in December. The site being cleared also results in a considerable amount of dust when windy and it is seemingly “infested” with rats.
- **General points** – There is a lot of development in the area which is resulting in public realm becoming “squeezed”. The underground services are already overcrowded. Parking provision is a major problem in the area with people parking along London Road and North Drive at the moment. The residents parking scheme does not work and the hours are not restrictive enough to prevent visitors to restaurants parking on existing roads. Residents welcome the idea of a food store and would not want to see another restaurant.

### 3. Emerging proposals

Following a brief presentation by PTEa of the emerging scheme, using printed images as a guide, attendees were asked to discuss the initial thoughts for the proposals. A range of topics were discussed across the two tables including:

- **Height of proposals** – Discussion suggested that plans for stepped height away from existing residents, towards the bus garage would be better suited in this location. Six storeys at the rear of the site is considered high but clarification of the distance this would be from the rear to the North Drive properties is needed. The mews houses on the eastern boundary should be kept to 2/2.5 storeys or lower.
- **Overlooking/privacy** – There should be no windows proposed on the back of the mews houses and any windows on the proposed central block should be carefully considered. A cross-section through the site, to the existing residential properties would be helpful at the next consultation event, to provide better clarity on distances.
- **Daylight/sunlight** – It was felt that daylight/sunlight issues were often relayed to residents as too technical. A “user friendly” guide to this issue and a clear explanation of what impact the scheme has on existing residents would be beneficial at any following consultation event.
- **Pedestrian alleyway** – The existing alleyway attracts a lot of anti-social behaviour at present. Clarity was sought as to how encouraging this for pedestrian access to Hounslow East Underground station would be managed. Better landscaping to improve this area and discourage use of motor vehicles i.e. mopeds would also be beneficial.
- **Parking provision** – Residents queried the level of parking to be provided on site and more clarity will be needed at the next consultation event. Low or no car parking provision would not be supported.
- **Pedestrian refuge on London Road** – The existing pedestrian refuge space on London Road are used by existing residents and questions were asked whether there would be any alterations to these as they are useful to cross the road.
- **Food store** – A convenience food store is a welcome idea on the London Road frontage but any servicing should be carefully considered and as far away from existing residents in Aces Court as possible.
- **Security** – A lot of discussion focussed on the pedestrian use of the site with a concern being expressed that, should a pedestrian link be opened up through the site to the existing pedestrian network to the north, then this could result in security issues for the existing residents. It was confirmed that the plans include new built form along the existing boundary which would actually result in increased security for existing residents, this was broadly welcomed by attendees but more detail is to be provided on the height of this built form.

### 4. Conclusions

Overall discussion was constructive throughout; the principle of residential development was acceptable on this site. More details will need to be provided at future neighbour workshop events regarding distances between the proposed mews housing on the eastern boundary and the existing residents of North Drive. Potentially stepping back any higher elements proposed for the site towards the bus garage would be seen as a positive with existing residents. Privacy and overlooking will also need to be carefully considered as well as the impact on daylight / sunlight on existing resident, in particular Aces Court.

Parking is also a key issue for existing residents and more detail on the proposed level of parking space on the site will be required at a later stage – residents felt strongly that a no or low car scheme would not be appropriate.

The design approach needs to take into consideration the differing views of the site from the various positions along North Drive. The previous built form on site included industrial warehouses which only went part way along the boundary with existing residents, therefore 4 or 5 properties never had built form adjacent to them. Similarly the height which was established by the Former Hounslow House building of seven storeys, on London Road and adjacent to Aces Court should be taken into consideration.

Residents welcomed the opportunity to discuss the emerging proposals and looked forward to being kept informed as the plans for the site progress. The potential format of the next round of engagement is yet to be determined but residents suggested that written communication would be appropriate alongside any further workshop. Attendees also indicated their willingness to help organise another neighbour workshop should it be required in the future.