

Great North Leisure Park N12 OGL – a design brief

The community would welcome the opportunity to join with the Council and the Developer in a co-design for this important site. In the first instance there should be an agreed brief for the site and a clear Design Code prepared together with the community. It is hoped that this will in turn enable a smooth path through the planning process and a well designed and sustainable development on the site. The following statement builds on the 10 characteristics of good design in the National Design Guide

Context

Barnet characterisation study of 2010 provides a useful starting point for understanding the character of the Borough of Barnet and especially this eastern side. This site is South of North Finchley and Colney Hatch. It is in the East Finchley characterisation area p109. A mixture of suburban terrace, box, residential estates and flats are on the periphery, plus protected green space and a site of scientific interest (applied for).

The area is essentially Suburban. (this has been reaffirmed twice now at appeal on the Homebase site further up the road towards North Finchley) Current uses are focussed on leisure, but with very poor connection to the open space of Glebelands which is designated as Metropolitan Open Land and in part as a site of Nature Conservation interest. (likely to be upgraded to a SSSI.) Off an extremely busy main road and close to North Circular road this is a culdesac site with no connections to the neighbourhood, shopping, or any other facilities. There is no essential shopping within walking distance. Schools capacity needs to be ascertained, and which schools and how to safely walk to them. Doctors – could we get gp's into Finchley memorial through this? Is this a suitable place to create a new neighbourhood? What is within walking distance, 15mins. If missing, can they be provided?

Movement

The site and its connections. Poor generally, especially bad for walking and cycling, therefore not contributing to the aspiration of active travel. A1000 is very busy, unpleasant to walk along. Bike lane needs to be upgraded and improved. Safe Pedestrian access across road needed across the A1000 if approaching on the western side, and access across the slip road if approaching from the Eastern side from East Finchley . The A1000 cycle route needs to be improved and linked to further routes.

The bus routes that pass the site are limited. The 263 bus is heavily used and takes people to and from east Finchley Tube station. Not the nearest as the crow flies but the other 2 stations of Finchley Central and Woodside park are a difficult walk away

Pedestrian and cycle access through to Summers Lane from east of site would provide a link up to schools to the north. The existing public footpath to the south of the site to be improved and opened up to the site. Currently very unsafe. Within the new development provide an overlooked and permeable street network; with active frontages on streets. No podiums

Parking on site – below ground for all except visiting, accessible, etc. No podiums built over car parks as these do not give good active frontages.

Refuse collection – could this be underground system, linking flats, residential to collection points at main road

Nature

Improved access to the adjacent open spaces. No loss of existing open spaces. Trees, hedges and biodiversity on the development site to be interwoven into the design and the adjacent sites. Current hedges along A1000 date back to 1811-1816 Finchley Common Enclosure and should be retained. Street trees; public gardens, private gardens, balconies to be large enough and strong enough to allow

for planting troughs. Green walls and roofs. Take every opportunity to encourage planting to help to lower hard surface, reduce heat island effect and to shade.

Built form

Urban design to major on the street; buildings to have clear fronts, on the street, and backs to private space. Entrances to homes to be clear, welcoming and facing the street. All ground floor flats to have their own entrances. A mixture of heights – ranging from 2 - 7 storeys, nothing taller. A variety of forms and heights to avoid a dense mass of blocks close together, and including terraces of houses.

Identity

Character of buildings. Modern, not pastiche. Open not private, very much a green space. Barnet is a green Borough and front gardens, and green frontages are a key characteristic. Materials to be sustainable, green. Welcoming,

Public space

Must be overlooked and friendly, accessible. Development to overlook the Glebelands Open space, maybe family housing with public space and facilities to support and encourage use of Glebelands. Plenty of play space for all ages, allotment gardens. Create green space linkages between existing open space and A1000.

Uses

Should include an emphasis on leisure, including improved provision for swimming, both indoors and out, gym, other leisure uses – cinema, bowls. Make connections to bring together the bowls, rugby, football clubs already around Glebelands and to encourage better use of Glebelands. Outdoor swimming – lido – would be best linked to this green facility

Homes and Buildings

Homes – to be a variety of types and tenures, including family housing (in houses). 50% affordable. Absolutely no single aspect dwellings. Community centre and café, space for working and essential shops. The aim is to create a balanced neighbourhood with residents who will wish to stay and form a stable community.

Resources

Environmental design. Whole development should be to zero carbon standards, including the creation of renewable energy. Use of ground source heat pumps and other initiatives. Biophillic design perhaps? Low energy networks. Sustainable Urban Drainage to be employed and designed to complement biodiversity of site.

Lifespan

Aim should be for this to become a sustainable community that encourages residents to remain long term, provides lifetime homes and opportunities into the long term. Management of the communal spaces and buildings must be clear, with plans in place from the outset for care of green spaces and buildings. Consider Community management schemes and ongoing support for community organisations operating in the area.

Mary Hogben – Finchley Society Planning Committee. Roger Chapman, Chair Barnet greenspaces.