



Victoria Quarter

October 2023 Planning  
Application

Open Discussion

# Agenda

Introduction - Purpose of the meeting



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graph TD; A[Introduction - Purpose of the meeting] --> B[Summary of the application strengths and weaknesses]; B --> C[Highlight the issues raised by the inspector and the issues he accepted in the refused scheme.]; C --> D[Get your feedback on the issues raised or any other issues]; D --> E[Summarise the views of the meeting and agree actions going forward];
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Summary of the application strengths and weaknesses

Highlight the issues raised by the inspector and the issues he accepted in the refused scheme.

Get your feedback on the issues raised or any other issues

Summarise the views of the meeting and agree actions going forward



## Introduction

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The original scheme of 371 was approved in 2017. Since then we have had two schemes refused, one for 652 homes and one for 539 homes. This third and latest application is for 486 when you include blocks H&J on which work has already commenced. Given how long this process has been going on what we felt was important was to get feedback from the community and whether community views have changed.

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What we would like to do this evening is give you a brief summary of the scheme from our perspective, highlighting the improvements and the problems that still exist, summarise the issues raised at the planning inquiry and therefore what might and might not be grounds for another refusal and then open it up for discussion to get as many views as possible.

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We are grateful that both our MP and local ward councillors are here and they can hear what the community feels.

# Improvements and failings of the application

## **Improvements:**

- They have returned to the finger block layout of the 2017 consented scheme
- They have reduced the number of dwellings from the refused scheme – but not by many - still 115 more than the consented scheme.
- They have reduced the heights slightly - we still have 1 x 8 storey block but that was in the consented scheme but 6 of the blocks are still 6 storeys including the four finger blocks facing the park.
- They have reduced the number of single aspect flats – but 20% are still single aspect.
- They are now meeting the child play space requirement for 0-11 year olds.
- They have changed the logistics routes so they no longer propose going over Hadley Common

# Improvements and failings of the application

## Failings:

- There are still 486 homes in the scheme which is 115 more than the consented scheme.
- There are no houses and the mix of dwellings does not meet Barnet's priorities for 3 and 4 bed homes with only 2% 4 bed homes and 21% 3 bed homes while having 36% studio and 1 bed flats – there were no studio flats in the consented scheme.
- Car parking is still 0.6 spaces per home compared to 1 per home plus visitor spaces in the consented scheme.
- 191 of the 420 flats will require an active cooling system to avoid overheating including most of the social housing flats which are adjacent to the railway line. Because the government introduced new building regulations it looks like more flats will require cooling than the refused scheme. That adds running costs for the occupier. They have not addressed issues such as reducing the noise to allow the windows to open and provided shading to reduce the solar gain.
- 25% of the flats fail to meet the minimum daylight guidelines; 27% of living rooms don't meet the guidelines and 95% of the kitchens – which are almost exclusively in the social housing - do not meet the guidelines. This is a higher number than in the refused scheme and may be due in part to the reduced window sizes proposed to reduce the impact of overheating.
- The local infrastructure is overstretched especially GP's - 1 GP:2,666 patients compared to benchmark 1:1,800. This scheme will add in total another 1,039 people.
- Very limited information about the railway tunnel replacement or the energy centre proposals.
- "The detailed urban design and architecture currently appears overly repetitive, monolithically formed, and somewhat lacking human-scale interest, space hierarchy, experiential variety and context responsiveness" – Barnet Urban Designers, May 2023.

# Key highlights from the planning appeal



Issues the Planning Inspector raised as concerns contributing to the refusal:



30% single aspect flats – now 20% but still more than the guidelines and 19 studio flats in the finger blocks are single aspect.



Daylight/sunlight - 6% of rooms not meeting daylight/sunlight minimum guidelines (now 25%).



Overheating – 221 flats need active cooling (now at least as many).



Character – the block massing has been reduced but is it enough especially the 6 storeys facing the park.

# Key highlights from the planning appeal



Issues the Planning Inspector seems happy with:



Parking provision at 0.6 spaces per flat. We could argue for them to excavate the basement of block A that would add around 35 additional spaces and would make it easier for those people in Blocks H&J to access their cars.



Refuse storage and collection - although it is an issue raised by Barnet's Urban designers at the pre application stage as they are worried it block the garden between blocks D&E.



Affordable housing adjacent to the railway line.




The housing mix – he states that 2 bed flat are family homes are acceptable if 70-79sqm (we need to check how many are 70-79sqm as the minimum is 61sqm).

# What are your thoughts?

## Concerns about:

- The number of flats requiring active cooling and the cost for social housing tenants;
- Noise problems restricting window openings;
- The number of single aspect units;
- The impact these shortcomings will have on residents' mental health;
- The housing mix with such a high proportion of studio and 1 bed flats when 3 and 4 bed family housing is Barnet's priority;
- Problems of density and the impact that has on the local infrastructure especially GPs;
- The bins area for the four finger blocks and how it will make the garden area look;
- Parking and the fact that there are not enough spaces for tenants;
- The impact the design will have on service charges for residents;
- The risk that once approved the developer will come back asking for amendments to add more flats – as they did with the approved 2017 scheme.





# Summarise the meeting and agree actions

- The consensus was that we should focus on maybe five priorities, focused around issues identified by the Planning Inspector at the appeal asking for modifications.
  - These include: overheating, railway noise, daylight/sunlight, high proportion of small flats, out of character with the area and impact these have on the mental health of residents.
  - Make objections constructive - what could they do to resolve the issue such as noise barriers, brise soleil, design/orientation of flats, replacing some of the single aspect studio flats in the finger blocks with 3 bed, 5 person dual aspect flats.
  - Contrast the application scheme with comments raised by Barnet's Urban Designers in the pre app meetings.
  - Contact council department consultees that will be impacted by the consequences, especially health issues.
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