



Economy, Jobs and Partnerships – planning application comments

Application reference	DC/22/129789
Proposal	Demolition of existing buildings and redevelopment of the site comprising a block rising to 5/6 storeys accommodating 1,401sqm of employment floorspace (Use Classes E(g)(i)(ii)(iii)) at ground and mezzanine floors and 60 residential units (Use Class C3) above, with associated landscaping, amenity areas, cycle, car parking and refuse/recycling stores.
Address	21- 57 Willow Way, London, SE26 4QP
Officer	John Bennett, Head of Economy, Jobs and Partnerships
Date	26/01/2023

Comments

The Council's Head of Service for Economic Development has the following comments on the application.

The proposed redevelopment of this site provides an opportunity to improve the quality of the commercial workspace available in this area.

The site is within a Local Employment Location (LEL) as designated by the current Local Development Plan, and within a Locally Significant Industrial Site (LSIS) as designated by the emerging new Local Plan. As such it is vital that this site has its commercial uses protected and enhanced where possible.

Overall the design of the scheme and the proposed three units appear to offer a positive contribution to the local economy. It is anticipated there will be reasonable demand for these units if built. The marketing strategy for the units gives initial priority to local businesses or workspace operators and this is welcomed. Should the development proceed, the Council's Economy, Jobs and Partnerships service will be willing to assist with the marketing and promotion of the units to local businesses and operators.

However, there are some issues which could require further consideration by the applicant.

Firstly, the emerging new Local Plan suggests an indicative development capacity of 6,705sqm of commercial floorspace from the wider LSIS in which this site is situated. Whilst the small net gain of commercial workspace in this proposal is welcomed and the potential additional jobs through alternative commercial uses, it is suggested there

is potential to provide a higher level of commercial workspace and therefore jobs through this development. The West Area Place Principles in the new Local Plan state that “*comprehensive redevelopment of sites within Willow Way LSIS will be supported where this retains and enhances industrial capacity and local employment provision*”. This current proposal appears to satisfy the retention of industrial capacity, but does not enhance it. Furthermore, the Emerging Outline Masterplan provided as part of the supporting documentation estimates the commercial floorspace available in total from the proposed redeveloped site in total. The total floorspace proposed, including this development, falls well short of the 6,705sqm indicative development capacity at just 4,762sqm. This demonstrates that this proposed site should be proposing a higher level of commercial space.

Secondly, there appears to be three businesses who will be forced to relocate by the proposed development. It is unclear whether these businesses have been consulted in the development of this proposal. There is no detail provided in either the Statement of Community Involvement or Employment and Marketing Strategy.

Whilst there is likely to be some statutory compensation owing to those businesses from the termination of leases etc should this development go ahead, the businesses will still be faced with costs from the practical costs of moving their business (e.g. removals, taking on new leases) and establishing their business in a new location (e.g. marketing). It is reasonable to ask the landowner to contribute to these costs given that the proposed development will be the cause. If the businesses are not supported there is a risk that the redevelopment would put these businesses and jobs under threat.

Finally, in line with the requirements of the Planning Obligations SPD, obligations should be sought to secure employment and business opportunities arising from the redevelopment. This should be both during the construction and end-use phases of the redevelopment. The Local Labour and Business Scheme can help calculate the levels of contributions appropriate to the scale of the development proposed.

Based on the above, it is suggested that should planning permission be granted then the following planning conditions should be required:

- A package of support to be paid for by the landowner which provides practical help and support for existing businesses to find alternative commercial premises, either temporary or permanent. This should include a mixture of financial support and professional advice;
- Section 106 financial obligations for employment & training and Local Labour and Business Scheme, along with non-financial obligations relating to local labour and business opportunities during the construction and end-use phases.