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## Appeal Decision

Inquiry held on 24 – 27 May & 2 June 2016

Site visit made on 27 May 2016

**by Katie Peerless Dip Arch RIBA**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government**

**Decision date: 02 August 2016**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/G5180/W/16/3144248**

**Land to the rear of former Dylon International Premises, Station Approach, Lower Sydenham, London SE26 5HD**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Mr Iain Hutchinson against the Council of the London Borough of Bromley.
  - The application Ref: DC/15/04759/FUL1 is dated 30 October 2015.
  - The development proposed is demolition of existing buildings and redevelopment of the site by the erection of a part eight, part nine storey development comprising 253 residential units (128 one bedroom, 115 two bedroom and 10 three bedroom) together with the construction of an estate road and ancillary car and cycle parking and the landscaping of the east part of the site to form open space accessible to the public.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main Issues

2. Since the appeal was lodged, the Council has indicated that, had jurisdiction not passed to the Secretary of State, it would have refused the appeal on a number of grounds. Taking these into account, I consider that the main issues in this case are as follows:

The effect of the proposed development on

- (i) the area of Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) in which it would be located, in particular whether it constitutes inappropriate development and, if so, whether there are any material considerations that outweigh the harm caused by inappropriate development in the MOL, and any other harm, sufficient to justify the proposal on the grounds of very special circumstances.
  - (ii) the character and appearance of the surroundings, with particular reference to the quality of its design, especially in relation to its scale, form, density and the measures taken to mitigate the risk of flooding;
- and
- (iii) the amenities of the future occupiers of the dwellings with particular reference to natural ventilation and solar gain and noise.
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3. Although the Council was initially concerned that the proposed development would not meet its requirements in terms of numbers of apartments with wheelchair accessibility, further information submitted at the Inquiry resolved this question and the Council withdrew its objection on this ground.

### **Site and surroundings**

4. The appeal site is part of former industrial premises and was previously a sports ground for the employees. It is roughly triangular in shape and is bounded to the west by a railway line and to the north east/south west by the river Pool. It contains the remains of a number of disused buildings associated with the sports ground use and areas of hardstanding. A part of the site is presently being used as a temporary compound associated with the development of the remainder of the former works on the land to the north and there is also an enclosed compound in a commercial use to the south but the remainder is mostly now rough grass with a track running close to the river from north to south.
5. The site lies within the New Beckenham area of Metropolitan Open Land, most of which comprises other sports grounds and playing fields. All of these areas are also part of the Green Chain. Beyond the railway, to the west, lies an industrial estate with residential development in Copers Cope Road and Worsley Bridge Road to the east. Lower Sydenham Station is close by, to the north.

### **The appeal proposals**

6. The proposed development consists of 253 apartments in a single, articulated block on a north/south axis adjacent to the railway line. An access road with on-street parking would run parallel to the railway line and further parking space would be located in a basement beneath the building. This would allow the first level of residential accommodation to be raised and so prevent flooding should the river level rise. Water would be allowed to flow in and out of the car park via a series of grilles set into a landscaped area to the east of the block.
7. The remainder of the site would also be landscaped into an area of recreational parkland accessible to the public, containing an outdoor gym and a children's playground, with parking spaces to the north.
8. The scheme has been designed by the architect of the adjacent residential development on the site of the former works and would have a similar palette of materials, including yellow London stock brickwork, ribbed translucent glazed panels to the circulation cores and recessed balconies. The block would have 10 storeys, including the basement, and be set out in a 'zig-zag' shape along a central spine, with 7 facets on each long elevation, set at an angle of 120°. The apartments are a mixture of studio, two and three bedroom units, each with at least one balcony or private terrace.

### **Reasons**

9. There is no dispute between the parties that the site lies within MOL or that policy 7.17 of the London Plan (LP) gives the same protection to such areas as is given to Green Belt in national policy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). It is therefore also agreed that the

proposed development would be inappropriate development which would be inherently harmful and consequently only acceptable if shown to be justified through the existence of very special circumstances.

10. One of the main differences between the parties centres on the weight to be accorded to the MOL policies and the other Development Plan (DP) policies relating to housing land supply (HLS), with the Council considering that it can demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land to meet its objectively assessed need (OAN). The appellants, however, submit that the claimed supply, at 5.1 years, is an over estimation and that there is a shortfall in the 5 year supply. This would mean that the policies relating to the supply of housing would be considered out of date and paragraphs 49 and 14 of the Framework would consequently be engaged.

#### *Housing Land Supply*

11. I consider that the starting point for this case is therefore whether the Council can demonstrate a 5 year HLS. The parties have produced a Statement of Common Ground (SoCGH) on the topic which sets out the areas of agreement, and disagreement, between them. It is agreed that the base date for calculating the supply is 1 April 2015 and that the annual housing target for the Borough as set in the Further Alterations to the London Plan (FALP) is 641 dwellings per annum (dpa) to which a 5% buffer should be applied to ensure variety and availability of choice. This gives a figure of 673 dpa for the period 2015 – 2020; a total of 3365 units.
12. The Council, in the SoCGH, considers that it can demonstrate a supply of 3443 units or, if it is considered that a 5% lapse rate (as discussed below) is applied to known sites with planning permission, 3403 units. This equates to 5.1 or 5.05 years' supply respectively. Taking all the reductions suggested by the appellants' results, in the worst case scenario, to a supply of 2480 units or 3.68 years HLS.
13. The matters in dispute between the parties are limited to the following points: firstly the position on 3 sites where the numbers of units that will be delivered are not agreed, secondly, the number of windfall sites that should be included per annum and thirdly, whether lapse rates should be applied to the categories of 'known sites with planning permission not commenced' and 'other sites', which are included in the 5 year supply figures.
14. Of the 3 sites in dispute, the first, Sundridge Park Manor, is considered by the Council to be capable of delivering at least 14 dwellings. The site has planning permission for this but the developers have stated that this level is unviable and will not be built out. The appellants suggest that, for this reason, the site should be removed from the list. The developers also applied to build 22 dwellings on the site but the revised scheme was refused permission at a planning committee meeting on the evening of the day the Inquiry closed, despite an officer's recommendation for approval.
15. It seems to me that, in these circumstances, the future of the site is very uncertain and it would be imprudent to assume that any units might come forward within the 5 year time frame. This means that 14 units should be deducted from the Council's total.

16. A site at Tweedy Road is being released by the Council for development with design guidance indicating that 24 units are likely to be acceptable. The appellants consider that it is a sensitive site that is not suitable for the scale of development originally envisaged, i.e. 40 units, and should be removed in its entirety. The site is now being actively marketed by the Council and, given the design studies carried out, I see no reason why the number of units included in the SoCGH calculations should not be deliverable within the 5 year time scale.
17. The final site is the former Town Hall and car park that was granted planning permission for 53 units in November 2015, after the base date of 1 April 2016. The appellants submit that the appropriate estimate is the 20 units envisaged at the base date, whereas the Council considers that the latest position should be the one on which the figures are based.
18. Whilst there is more up-to-date information now available, it seems to me that if additional units granted planning permission after the base date are to be taken into account, so should any units that have been completed after the base date and consequently removed from the future supply availability, in order to present the most accurate overall picture. This exercise had not been completed for the Inquiry and I therefore conclude that for the purposes of this appeal, the position as agreed in the SoCGH should be adhered to.
19. In conclusion therefore, on this topic, I consider that 47 units<sup>1</sup> should be taken out of the total of allocated sites and other known sites that the Council consider to be deliverable in the table attached to the SoCGH.
20. Turning to the number of windfall sites that should be included, the Council rely on the figures which were informed by the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) carried out in 2013 and based on the years 2004 - 2012. However, the appellants point out that this was a measure of capacity and does not necessarily reflect the actual rate of delivery of sites.
21. At the Examination in Public (EiP) into the FALP the Inspector found that it was likely that it would not deliver sufficient homes to meet London's OAN but non-adoption would result in the retention of the existing housing targets, which were even lower than those in the FALP. In those circumstances, he concluded that the FALP should be adopted but subject to an immediate review, with the clear intention of increasing the supply across all forms of delivery.
22. The Council considers that any review of the likely level of windfall sites should wait until the next SHLAA is carried out, but, given the situation set out in the EiP Report into the FALP, I disagree. There is now more recent data available which demonstrates that the availability of such sites has reduced in the 3 years since the SHLAA was published and given the FALP Inspector's conclusions on the need to increase delivery, even though capacity might be sufficient, I consider that the windfall allowance suggested by the Council is unrealistic and should be reduced.
23. At present, the Council has included a total of 1100 units (220 dpa) in its small sites allowance for windfalls for the relevant 5 year period which equates to about 1/3 of its housing requirement. The total from all small sites is set at 352 dpa in the Council's calculations, but this figure has not been achieved in the Borough since 2007/8, with the overall trend for such completions moving steadily downwards.

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<sup>1</sup> 14 from the Sundridge Park Manor site and 33 from the former Town Hall site

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24. The level of reliance on 'unknown' sites has been criticised in the past by Inspectors and the appellants suggest that the 5 year trend figure of 1330 units from small sites over 5 years, resulting in 742 windfall dwellings over the period would be a better estimate. This figure is based on actual completions and it has been previously agreed by the Borough, in its evidence to the FALP EiP, that about 1800 small sites over the period 2015 - 2025 would be a more realistic figure.
25. Given the downward trend, and even taking a conservative figure midway between the 1100 now supported by the Council and its previous prediction of 900 (over 5 years) suggested as achievable at the EiP, would mean that the Council would narrowly miss the 5 year HLS target.
26. Even if this were not the case, the Council has made no allowance for any lapse rates on sites where planning permission has already been granted but not yet commenced. It has agreed, through the Inquiry process, that a 5% rate could possibly be applied to such sites, if found necessary, and this on the Council's own calculations would bring the HLS down to 5.05 years, as noted above.
27. The appellants submit that a lapse rate of between 30 – 50% should be applied to these sites and also to 'other known sites' where planning permission has not yet been granted. This view is based on the findings of previous Inspectors who were concerned that a 100% delivery rate was unrealistic and a variety of other evidence, including the 2013 SHLAA and comparison of delivery rates against Annual Monitoring Reports (AMR).
28. The figures show that there has been an overall failure to achieve the projected completions and while there are some years where targets have been met, the overall trend is a shortfall of up to 50%. It therefore seems to me that a lapse rate should be applied, to give a more accurate picture of what is likely to be achieved in terms of actual completions and that figure should be higher than the Council's assumed 5% and applied to both categories.
29. Even if a lapse rate of only 6%, rather than the 30 – 50% suggested by the appellants, were to be applied to the sites with planning permission that have not commenced and to other known sites as adjusted as set out above, the 5 year HLS would not be met. This would be the case even if the Council's figure on windfalls were to be accepted. I have however, for the reasons set out above, concluded that this would be an unreliable estimate.
30. I therefore conclude that, on the figures used to inform the agreed position on the SoCGH, the Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites and, for the purposes of this appeal, the policies that are relevant to the supply of housing are not up-to-date.

#### *Metropolitan Open Land*

31. The designation of MOL is linked to that of Green Belt in national policy and both parties agree that the policies in respect of it are relevant to the supply of housing. My findings on the HLS situation therefore mean that they are now out-of-date and that, while they are still part of the DP for the Borough, the weight that can be accorded to them is consequently reduced.

32. The appellants also submit that, in this situation, the MOL designation is a local one, related only to the LP, and does not therefore fall within footnote 9 of the Framework which relates back to paragraph 14. This paragraph notes that where relevant DP policies are out-of-date permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts would '*significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits*' when assessed against '*the policies in this Framework as a whole*' and '*specific policies in this Framework*' indicate that development should be restricted.
33. Footnote 9 cites Green Belt as one of these specific policies. The appellants maintain that every word in the Framework is important, carefully considered and should be read as written and that therefore, because MOL is not mentioned in the Framework, there are no policies relating to it therein and paragraph 14 is not engaged in respect of the designation.
34. The Council disagrees, submitting that the Framework refers to national policy only, with MOL being a local designation that relies on the LP for its association with Green Belt policy and this is why it is not mentioned in the examples given in footnote 9. It submits that this does not mean that MOL policy is not covered by, or is inconsistent with the Framework; rather the Green Belt policies of the NPPF nevertheless apply by analogy to MOL by virtue of the references to it in the adopted DP which includes the LP.
35. However, I consider these arguments to be somewhat academic in this case. Whether or not MOL is a 'specific policy' in terms of footnote 9, it remains part of the adopted DP, through the up-to-date LP, and triggers the need to identify very special circumstances if planning permission is to be granted. In any event, the appellants do not dispute that 'very special circumstances' will need to be found here. To this end, they submit that the Framework clearly infers that significantly less weight should be accorded to policies that are found to be out-of-date and have made their submissions on this basis and that very special circumstances apply that are sufficient to justify the scheme.
36. To this end, the appellants also question the extent to which the appeal site is contributing to the purposes of its MOL designation. To be designated as MOL, LP policy 7.17 requires it to meet one of the following criteria. It should contribute to the physical structure of London by being clearly distinguishable from the built up area, it should include open air facilities for leisure, recreation, sport, the arts and cultural activities, which serve either the whole or significant parts of London, or it should it contain features or landscapes of either national or metropolitan value.
37. The last 2 criteria are not met as there is no public access to the land and no features that meet the description. It is the case that the land is not clearly visually linked with the playing fields to the east of the Pool river from any of the viewpoints visited during the site inspection and, at the time of that visit when the vegetation was at its thickest, the extent of the wider MOL was not readily apparent from the site itself. Nevertheless, I accept that this may be somewhat different when the leaves are off the trees, as seen in photographs of the site. In any event, the site nonetheless makes a contribution to the larger open area through the fact of its designation and, as with land in Green Belt, the extent of visibility of the site does not necessarily reduce the importance of the contribution that it makes. It is 'openness' that is the critical factor, with visual impact being judged under different criteria.

38. However, I would disagree with the finding of the Greater London Authority (GLA) in its advice on the proposal that the site is '*clearly distinguishable from the built up area to the north*' or that it '*connects with a wider network of open space*'. There is no link across the river and the site is surrounded by dense development on all other sides. It is only really in the aerial photographs that the site can be clearly linked to the open land around it. For these reasons, I find that the contribution that the site is making to the MOL designation criteria is not as significant as the adjacent sports fields beyond the river and the harm caused by the proposed development to the MOL will be considered in the light of this finding.
39. There is already some development in the form of single storey buildings and hardstanding used for commercial storage on part of the land. The footprint of the new block and its related development would cover about 44- 48% of the site, compared to the area of 'brownfield' land which is about 37% of the total at present. Although the GLA appeared to believe that some of the development on the site was unauthorised, there was no suggestion made at the Inquiry that this was the case or any challenge to the planning status of the previously developed land.
40. The appellants were at pains to point out that loss of openness is to be distinguished from visual impact and that, in their view, openness is lost once land ceases to be free from development and the height or bulk of the development is not relevant to an assessment of the extent of this loss. The impact of the scale of the development should therefore be judged through a separate visual assessment and they maintain that land that is previously developed already has lost its open status for the purposes of MOL policy and any additional development on such land should not be 'double counted' when the extent of any harm is being assessed .
41. I agree that the concepts of openness and visual impact are distinguishable and that the difference between the existing and proposed percentages of developed footprint on the site, at 11% at most, is relatively small when set against the wider expanse of MOL of which the appeal site is part. Nevertheless, there is no dispute that the proposed development would result in a loss of openness and this loss would be clearly discernable from wherever the new block could be viewed.
42. However, the weight to be given to this harm is reduced because, at local level, it is a relevant policy for the supply of housing and I have found there to be no 5 year HLS. Nevertheless, there is still a considerable amount of undeveloped land that would be lost from the MOL and if considered on the same terms as Green Belt policy, the Framework makes clear that substantial weight should be accorded to any harm to the MOL. In this case therefore, I consider that, while the harm caused by inappropriate development and loss of openness may be tempered by the relevant policies being out of date, it is still a considerable factor weighing against the proposal.

### *Design*

43. The architect for the proposal is well known and respected and has explained his design rationale for the proposal in detail at the Inquiry and in his proof of evidence. The scheme has also been considered by independent architectural experts on behalf of both main parties.

44. They come to differing conclusions with the Council criticising the design of the development on several grounds, including its scale, bulk and detailing, its relationship to the public realm and surrounding development and the amenities that it would provide for the occupants.
45. The Council believe that the building would have a poor relationship with the public open space to the east through being set at a higher level on this elevation to allow for the flood defences. It also considers that it would be overly large in its context and that it would appear featureless, lacking the interest created by the varied roofline of the other part of the former Dylon land, referred to hereafter as 'Dylon 1' scheme.
46. Criticism is also made of the internal layout, based on the submissions that there would be minimal natural light available to the internal corridors, that there would be too many single aspect dwellings and that reliance on artificial ventilation to ensure that noise levels in the west facing units indicates poor design.
47. The appellants' expert disagrees, submitting that the building would provide a graduated link between the public and private areas and that would appear as a well-considered and appropriate response to, and continuation of, the Dylon 1 scheme. The constant roof line is said to be 'calm' and the geometry of the scheme is said to ensure entrances are clearly visible. It is also claimed that the quality of the internal amenities could be controlled by conditions to ensure that noise and ventilation levels were satisfactory.
48. Having carefully considered these contrasting views, I consider that the design of the building, taken in isolation, is indeed a meticulous and finely detailed concept that would reflect that of the Dylon 1 scheme. I find no problem with the integration of the flood protection measures into the layout, considering that they would be discreet and well integrated into the landscape proposals. Similarly, the 'podium' layout objected to by the Council would, I consider, be an appropriate method of providing private open space that is clearly separate, but not isolated from the park or access way, providing a link of at an appropriate human scale between the public and private realm at ground floor level.
49. Nevertheless, I am not persuaded that the relationship with the Dylon 1 site is the most important in this situation. That site is not within MOL and whilst its character is a factor that must now be taken into consideration in the design of any development on the appeal site, the proposed new block would, I consider, be of an overly dominant height when seen against the relatively small scale development on, and open nature of, other surrounding land.
50. The appeal scheme would maintain a uniform roof level and would be one storey higher than the top floor level of the Dylon 1 buildings, the bulk of which are then reduced as they step down towards the north. However, the remainder of the surrounding development is a mixture that includes industrial and commercial uses, generally at no more than 2 storeys high, the sports grounds that comprise the remainder of the MOL and suburban residential streets where development does not generally exceed 4 storeys at most, with much of it being limited to 2 storeys.

51. In this context, a building of 10 storeys and of the length proposed would, I consider, create a hard dominant edge that would be better suited to a more central urban area where the surrounding densities are more comparable. The constant height of the block would convey the impression of it being considerably larger than Dylon 1, which, as has been noted, is outside the MOL.
52. While the argument has been made that if development is to take place, it should deliver the highest density possible, it seems to me that if development is to take place that would effectively remove some of the designated MOL, it should be more closely aligned with the generally open nature of the remainder of the land within this designation and the suburban and less densely built-up character of the majority of the land adjoining it.
53. I noted at the site visit that the accurate visual representations presented by the appellants, while being a faithful reproduction of how the proposals would sit in the landscape nevertheless do not appear exactly as they do to the human eye when standing in the position from which the photographs were taken. In reality the site appears closer and the proposed buildings would look consequently larger when seen from surrounding roads. The impact of the scale of the development would therefore be greater than depicted in the illustrations.
54. The provision of the park in what is, at present, underused and neglected land is very welcome and would serve not only the residents of both Dylon schemes but would be open to other visitors. I am not persuaded that it would appear as private space for the blocks; local people would, I am sure, soon realise that it was open to all to use and would appreciate having a landscaped area adjacent to the river in which they could walk, exercise and take their children to play.
55. However, I am also of the opinion that the proposed building would be excessively high when seen from, and in relation to, the park and would have the effect of enclosing it, so that the open land would appear dominated and overlooked by the block. The sense of space would be diminished and the appreciation of the remaining areas of MOL within the site, and beyond where available, would also be reduced. The building would appear as a solid wall of development, despite the angled façades, with little variation along its length to relieve its somewhat monumental character.
56. It would be visible from a considerable distance and be prominent on the skyline, from where it would clearly be seen as one block despite the articulation of the elevations. There is no objection *per se* to seeing an attractive building in a location where previously there was little development, but in an area where specific protection has been accorded to the openness of the surroundings, I consider that particular care should be taken to ensure that any change does not appear overly bulky or higher than absolutely necessary.
57. The Planning Design and Access statement that accompanied the application comments as follows on the scale of the development: '*In determining an appropriate scale for the development regard has been had to the topography of the site; the relationship with and scale of the approved adjacent Phase 1 development; and the need to use scarce land resource effectively and efficiently.*'

58. It goes on to say: *'The proposed massing aims to optimise the potential of the site in terms of light, views and accessibility while being sensitive to the form and scale of its context. The massing is urban; however, the architectural articulation of the elevations with the rhythm and proportion of the windows gives the buildings a domestic scale.'*
59. Whilst the aims set out above are appropriate and the massing of the block is indeed urban, for the reasons set out above I am not persuaded that this is necessarily an acceptable solution for this predominantly open site set in a largely sub-urban townscape or that the building would in any way have a *'domestic scale'*. It would be impressive and massive but these are not the qualities that I feel are suitable for a site such as this and the scheme would consequently fail to relate sympathetically to the open space within and beyond the site boundaries across which most views of it would be achieved. Whilst it would continue the theme of the Dylon 1 development, I question whether this would be the correct template to follow, given the difference in designations between the 2 sites.
60. Turning to the question of residential amenity, whilst the majority of the units would span the full width of the block and consequently have a double aspect that would include the proposed park from at least some of the windows, I am nevertheless somewhat concerned about the number of single or limited aspect flats on the western elevation.
61. Each floor above ground level would have 6 units that faced only the railway, with another 2 having additional windows looking north or south, but not across the park. It is also the case that it is the units closest to the railway, at the points where the angled façades meet, which would have this limited outlook, as well as being closest to the source of most noise. Whilst mechanical ventilation and noise reduction measures could help to maintain minimum standards I am still concerned that this is a design flaw that results from an attempt to increase densities to more than could be comfortably accommodated on the site.
62. If permitted, the appeal scheme is likely to be used as a precedent for the character of the surroundings against which any future development of nearby sites would be judged. I am concerned that this could lead to a concentration of high rise development that would fail to make an appropriate transition between the open playing fields and sub-urban characteristics of the residential development to the east and the more commercial and urbanised areas to the north and west.
63. In conclusion on this topic, I consider that the extent of the proposed development on the site would be excessive, given the designation of the site and the impact on the character of the surroundings. I find that the scheme would not respect the character and appearance of its surroundings because of its overly dominant height and scale. It would thereby conflict with the policies set out in Chapter 7 of the Framework which seek to promote and secure good design that would help to raise the standards in the area.
64. I consider that the proposal would also fail to meet criterion H7 (iii) of the London Borough of Bromley Unitary Development Plan 2008 (UDP) which requires, amongst other things, that the site layout, buildings and space about buildings are designed to a high quality and recognise, as well as complement, the qualities of the surrounding areas.

65. Similarly UDP policy BE1 calls for all development proposals to be of a high standard of design and layout and they are expected to meet a number of criteria that include complementing the scale, form, layout and materials of adjacent buildings and areas. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the scheme would be in conflict with this policy as, although it would be seen as clearly related to the Dylon 1 development, it would still fail to complement the wider context in which it would be set.

*Very special circumstances/the balancing exercise*

66. I have found that the Council does not have a 5 year HLS and the provision of 253 new units, including 90 affordable units, is a significant benefit of the proposal. In addition to this, the economic benefits that would result from the building of a project of this scale are considerable.

67. The public park is another factor that weighs in favour of the scheme and the biodiversity improvements and provision of a possible link to the Waterlink Way would also add to the benefits. The housing delivery grant would, of course, be an advantage but the infrastructure contributions cited by the appellants as benefits are required to make the development acceptable in any event and do not add to the balance in favour of the scheme.

68. I do not accord any additional weight to the fact that the appearance of the site would be improved. This is because, as with Green Belt policy, the condition of the land is not a contributory factor in the designation; it is the openness of the MOL that is important in this context.

69. While the building might, in other location, be considered a valuable addition to the townscape, for the reasons set out above I do not find its relationship with its surroundings would be of sufficient architectural quality to be a consideration in its favour. Indeed, my concerns about the scale and massing of the block, together with the quality of the accommodation for some of the future occupants, are major factors weighing against the proposal.

70. I have found that there is harm to the openness of the MOL as well as the harm by reason of inappropriateness, albeit at a level that is reduced due to the factors outlined above and by the policies of the UDP being outdated in terms of their relevance to the supply of housing. Nevertheless, I also note that the Government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states that '*unmet housing need ... is unlikely to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and other harm to constitute the "very special circumstances" justifying inappropriate development on a site within the Green Belt.*'

71. Even if it is considered that the MOL policies are not carried through to the Framework, they are nevertheless still treated in the same way as those relating to the Green Belt in the LP and I consider that the PPG applies to them in the same way as to the Green Belt policies.

72. I have taken account of the other housing sites that have been granted planning permission in MOL in the Borough and elsewhere but the circumstances in each of these were very different to those in this case and preceded the latest edition of the PPG. I have therefore considered this case on its own particular circumstances and merits.

## **Conclusions**

73. I consider that the extent of harm that would be caused through inappropriate development, loss of openness and to the character and appearance of the surroundings are factors that cause the proposed development to conflict with the DP to a substantial degree. I find that the scheme would not represent sustainable development as defined in paragraph 7 of the Framework because of its failure to meet the environmental criteria set out in that paragraph, through the harm to the character of the surroundings.
74. Even though the policies for the supply of housing may be out of date, I conclude that the identified harm significantly and demonstrably outweighs the benefits in favour of the proposal identified above, when assessed against the policies of the Framework as a whole. Very special circumstances to justify the grant of planning permission do not, therefore, exist in this case.
75. Consequently, for the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*Katie Peerless*

**Inspector**

## **APPEARANCES**

### FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:

Gwion Lewis	Of Counsel instructed by Greg Ullman, Solicitor for the London Borough of Bromley
He called	
Claire Glavin BA (Hons) MRTPI	Principal Planning Officer, Planning Policy Team, London Borough of Bromley
Stephen Sensecall BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI	Senior Partner, Kemp and Kemp LLP

### FOR THE APPELLANT:

Russell Harris QC	Instructed by Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners
He called	
Ian Ritchie	Architect
Richard Coleman Dip Arch (Cant) RIBA	Architecture, Heritage and Townscape Consultant
Steven Butterworth	Senior Director, Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners.
Christopher Francis	West and Partners, Town Planning Consultants

### INTERESTED PERSONS:

Cllr. Russell Mellor

### DOCUMENTS

- 1 Notes of Mr Harris' opening statement
- 2 Notes of Mr Lewis' opening statement
- 3 Tibbald's report on 1<sup>st</sup> application on appeal site
- 4 Extract from PAS website
- 5 Screenshots from Hambridge website
- 6 Advertisement for Tweedy Road development site
- 7 Mr Ritchie's notes on acoustic and ventilation matters
- 8 Note on developed area including car park
- 9 Email from Environmental Health Officer in response to noise notes
- 10 Suggested Conditions
- 11 RPS note
- 12 UU Version A – Starter Homes version
- 13 UU Version B
- 14 Route Map to UU versions
- 15 Notes of Mr Lewis' closing submissions
- 16 Notes of Mr Harris' closing submissions