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 London SW14 7EL

3 March 2023

Head of Development Management

LB Richmond upon Thames

Civic Centre

44 York Street

Twickenham TW1 3BZ

For the attention of Grace Edwards

Dear Sir/Madam

**Planning Application 22/3758**

**Barnes Hospital: Redevelopment to provide a SEN school and health centre with associated works**

We refer to your letter of 10 Feb. 2023 inviting comments by 3 March. These are attached and the main points are as follows:

* We supported the application for both these components and for the housing at the outline stage in 2019 but registered concern about the issue of access;
* We note that the SEN school now has a much larger floorspace and site area for the same number of pupils as before (vis. 90) but can find no explanation for this increase in the accompanying documentation;
* As a result the floorspace and site area for the health centre – this being the existing mental health facility (MHF) – is smaller than before and again there is no mention in the accompanying documentation of whether this is sufficient given the likely increase in mental health cases during, and following, the pandemic;
* We agree with the Design Review Panel (DRP) that the MHF block should relate more to the SEN school than to the housing, hence its mansard roof and dormers are not appropriate, and that its front entrance needs to be moved to a more prominent location;
* We also agree with the DRP that the strip of ancillary buildings sandwiched between SEN and MHF is ‘not well considered’ and should be ‘reshaped’ to allow release of land for soft landscaping for the MHF (the Design Code specifies a minimum 300 sqm not yet achieved);
* We remain concerned about the access and look forward to seeing the Council’s current study of South (and North) Worple Way.

We urge the Council to consider the above prior to determining this application.

Yours faithfully,

Shaun Lamplough

Past Chair

**Barnes Hospital: SEN School, Mental Health Facility and associated works – MESS Comments**

Our Society’s Committee in 2019 supported the outline planning application for a medical centre, SEN school and housing **(18/3642)** but raised concern about the access. Since then we have made comments about the detailed planning application for the housing **(21/3107)**, where the number of units has increased from 83 to 109 with no change in the site area allocated, vis. 0.80 ha (56% of the total site area). We now have the opportunity to comment on the detailed application for the other two components.

Our comments are focused mainly on the Design and Access Statement (DAS). We note that the DAS makes reference to the report of the Design Review Panel (DRP). This was not amongst the accompanying documentation but we have asked for it and received it.

**The SEN School**

We note that the SEN School in the outline application was for 90 pupils and comprised a building floorspace of 2,402 sqm on a site area of 0.33 ha (23% of the total site area). We now note that the detailed application is still for 90 pupils but that the building floorspace has increased to 2,921 sqm on a site area of 0.44 ha (31% of the same). There appears to be no explanation for this increase in the DAS, nor in any other accompanying documentation. We have, however, noted that the Geo-environmental Assessment quotes a figure of 104 pupils which may provide a clue but all the other reports have assumed 90 pupils.

We note that the Design Code at the outline stage indicated a height limit of 3 storeys and the DAS has followed this. The DRP acknowledges that “overall the design has developed in a positive way with the SEN school successfully reconciling a demanding accommodation brief within a simple rectangular form” but that “the applicant team should take the opportunity to make the building less serious and more playful and joyous.” We agree with the DRP on this.

**The Mental Health Facility**

Not surprisingly the increase in the SEN school floorspace has resulted in a decrease in the floorspace of the other component which at the outline stage was described as a ‘medical hub’ and included a GP surgery, but which is now solely a Mental Health Facility (MHF) and indeed has been used as such for many years. We note the floorspace has decreased from 2,500 sqm on a site of 0.29 ha (21%) to 1,716 sqm on a site of 0.18 ha (13%). The decrease may be of concern given the increasing number of mental health cases during, and following, the recent pandemic but, again, we could find no mention of this in the DAS, nor in any other accompanying documentation.

We note too that the Design Code at the outline stage indicated a height limit of 3 storeys and that “the third storey should be set within a pitch roof to be consistent with the design and scale found in local residential architecture… as well as being similar to the third storey of the residential blocks” on the site itself. The DAS has followed this but the DRP has indicated that “the MHF Clinic building is less resolved… The overly dominant mansard roof relates poorly to the neighbouring School… We felt that presenting the School and Clinic buildings as part of the same ‘family’ by continuing to reinforce their design commonalities would form a more coherent approach and allow the new buildings in conjunction with the retained Gatehouse BTM to read as a community-based ensemble.” We agree with the DRP on this.

The DRP also points out that “the location of the main entrance is not ideal; its location towards the centre of the northern facade means that it is screened from the road by the existing boundary wall, and the sightline from the site’s pedestrian and vehicular entry point is poor despite the portico feature. Making the entrance more legible by moving to the north-east corner or eastern flank could be considered; alternatively extending the portico to the north east corner could be explored.” We entirely agree with the DRP on this. Interestingly it assumes that the boundary wall will be retained and not replaced by railings that will make the entrance more visible. Our Society supports the retention of historic walls in our area and was instrumental in getting a number of such walls designated as BTMs. We would like to see the boundary walls of Barnes Hospital added to this list in place of the five BTMs which are to be demolished.

The DRP’s final comment on the MHF is that “the internal layouts are densely planned at all floor levels. While the challenges of the functional brief and tight site are acknowledged, we note that several areas would benefit from additional study to improve these interiors.” The DRP then draws attention to a number of such areas. This has made us concerned about whether the accommodation provided in the MHF is fit for purpose. We would like to see the applicant’s response to this.

**The Associated Works**

The works include carparking, cycle parking, refuse facilities and landscaping.

The carparking has decreased from 11 to 6 spaces at the SEN school and from 26 to 18 spaces at the MHF. There has been a corresponding increase in cycle parking from 27 to 40 spaces at the MHF. We see this as inevitable given the Mayor of London’s determination to reduce vehicular traffic and following the decision to upgrade the PTAL rating of the site from 2-3 to 4.

We note the refuse facilities and other plant have been incorporated in a strip of single-storey buildings sandwiched between the SEN school and MHF. The DRP has indicated: “The strip… is not well considered. It takes up space that may otherwise be landscaped and detracts from the southern façade of the Clinic. We suggest exploring how this ancillary block could be re-shaped potentially into a compact form that links the Clinic with the School, tying the buildings together visually and releasing area for landscape.” The DAS has chosen to ignore this but we fully support the DRP.

We also note the Design Code indicates a minimum of 1,225 sqm for landscaping on the SEN school site (since increased to 1,260 sqm) and a minimum 300 sqm of soft landscaping at the MHF site. The DAS has followed the recommendations of the DRP and provided more tree planting in the SEN school carpark together with green walls and green roofs. However, we are concerned to see that the minimum of 300 sqm of soft landscaping on the MHL site (roughly half the ground floor area) has not been achieved. All we can see is a small area of about 50 sqm between the Gatehouse and bicycle stands in the wedge between the north elevation and the northern boundary wall. We support the proposal by the Friends of Barnes Hospital that soft landscaping should be provided in the form of a garden on the southern side of the MHF where MH out-patients can relax in a peaceful environment with privacy.