

SECTION '2' – Applications meriting special consideration

Application No : 14/04309/FULL1

Ward:
Petts Wood And Knoll

Address : Mega House Crest View Drive Petts
Wood Orpington BR5 1BY

OS Grid Ref: E: 544258 N: 167743

Applicant : G K Goldman Klein Ltd

Objections : YES

Description of Development:

Erection of roof extension to form part fourth floor to provide office accommodation (Use Class B1(a)).

Key designations:

Biggin Hill Safeguarding Birds
Biggin Hill Safeguarding Area
Local Cycle Network
Local Cycle Network
London City Airport Safeguarding

Proposal

This scheme is for the provision of a mansard roof extension to the existing block to provide an additional 4435sq ft/412 sq metres of additional floor space at third floor level to create two additional office suites. The extension will include three balconies to the rear elevation. The proposed plans also include elevational alterations to the existing building, including partial rendering and cladding, the provision of new uPVC windows, and alterations to the existing front glazed entrance to incorporate a dark grey aluminium finish. The application submission states that the existing 50 off-street parking spaces will remain in place.

This application is accompanied by a Planning, Design & Access Statement.

This application is accompanied by application ref. 14/04311 which relates solely to elevational alterations to the existing building.

Location

The application site is located to the SE corner of Crest View Drive, in close proximity of its junction with Queensway which forms the western part of Petts Wood District Centre. The site adjoins residential development to the north and west. The neighbouring properties to the north comprise of two-storey suburban

houses, whilst the building to the west (along the facing side of the road) forms a four-storey block of 12 flats of modern appearance. A public car park adjoins the site beyond its southern boundary, and a railway line beyond its eastern boundary.

Comments from Local Residents

Nearby owners/occupiers were notified of the application and representations were received which can be summarised as follows:

- loss of light/sunlight
- proposal will make Mega House taller than the building opposite

Comments were also received from the Petts Wood District Residents Association which can be summarised as follows:

- scheme will result in a much greater degree of overlooking
- applicant has not demonstrated economic need for additional office space, whereas in previous application there are references to vacant office space within the existing building
- similar proposal at Mortimer House, to the south of the adjoining public car park, was refused planning permission under reference 11/00538 and subsequently dismissed at appeal
- surrounding houses to the north of the site would be dwarfed by this proposal and would receive less light to their rear gardens and rear windows

Comments from Consultees

Technical Highways comments were raised in relation to the intended use of the lower three floors within the existing building (which are subject to Prior Approval for their conversion to flats): if these are to remain in office use, it will be necessary to consider whether there is existing parking capacity to accommodate additional parking; if the existing building is not fully let, the demand can be factored by the percentage occupied.

Any additional comments will be reported verbally at the meeting.

Planning Considerations

The application falls to be determined in accordance with Policies BE1 and EMP2 of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Planning History

Under application ref. 14/02500, Prior Approval was granted in respect of the change of use of the existing building from Class B1(a) office use to residential Class C3 use to provide 29 flats. The proposal also reduced the number of parking spaces within the site to around 32 (subject to the final layout being agreed) from the existing 50.

Of relevance, under ref. 11/00538, an application relating to the neighbouring building at Mortimer House (situated to the southern side of the adjoining public car park) involving for a four-storey extension and an additional two storeys to the existing offices to provide part four/ five storey building, was refused for the following reasons:

"The proposal, by reason of its excessive scale, bulk and height, would result in an overly prominent structure within the street scene and would impact detrimentally on the visual amenities of the area, contrary to Policy BE1 of the Unitary Development Plan.

The proposed development would be detrimental to the amenities now enjoyed by the residents of properties adjoining the site by reason of loss of prospect and visual impact as a result of the four storey rear extension, contrary to Policy BE1 of the Unitary Development Plan."

This application was subsequently dismissed at appeal.

Conclusions

The main considerations in this case relate to the impact of the proposal on local character and townscape and on residential amenity; the appropriateness of this development in this location in light of Policy EMP2 of the UDP and the NPPF; and whether the scheme provides an appropriate amount of parking.

In terms of local character, the application site is situated just beyond the northern periphery of Petts Wood District Centre, and adjoins residential development to the north and west. The development to the north comprises of two-storey houses. The facing block is four storeys in height, but incorporates a substantially smaller footprint (in comparison to Mega House) which measures approximately 300sq metres in area. The buildings to the south along Queensway are of two/three storey form and contribute to the modest scale and suburban character of this part of Petts Wood.

Whilst Mega House, in its existing three-storey form, is considered to be of a height commensurate with the neighbouring development, the enlarged building (the height of which will be increased to a maximum of 13.8m) will be of a height and bulk which will appear out of scale and dominant within its surroundings, particularly the neighbouring two-storey houses to the north. The facing building block, despite its four-storey form, will be lower in height than the enlarged building and, in any case, appears a lot more discreet within the streetscene in view of its relatively modest scale. Accordingly, this proposal is considered unacceptable due to its effect on local character.

Concerns have also been raised on the basis that the proposal will lead to loss of light and overlooking. However, taking account of the location of the third floor extension - which will maintain a minimum separation of approximately 9m to the nearest neighbouring dwelling at No 2 Queensway - and the lack of fenestration within the northern elevation of the proposed extension, it is not considered that

this will be so significantly affected by this proposal as to justify refusal on this ground.

In regard to the appropriateness of this office accommodation, Policy EMP2 advises that proposals for office development will be expected to ensure that:

- (i) the shopping functions of the town centres are not impaired;
- (ii) access to the development by means other than the private car can be achieved, if necessary through the use of planning obligations; and
- (iii) on small office schemes mixed use or flexible space for small businesses and start-ups can be achieved.

The policy goes on to advise that schemes that provide facilities for small businesses will be permitted in local centres, provided that the vitality and viability of that centre is not impaired.

In light of the above policy criterion, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in that the shopping function of the town centre will not be impaired; that there is adequate public transport service provision within close proximity of the site; and that the additional floor space has the potential to provide a beneficial business resource.

On the matter of parking, this application does not refer to the residential scheme which is the subject of Prior Approval for 29 flats within the existing building (with the associated reduction of parking spaces). The application has been submitted on the basis that this scheme provides an extension to the existing office accommodation with the existing 50 parking spaces remaining. The Agent has been asked to clarify the position, but if the existing level of parking provision is to remain, Members may consider that this existing level would be acceptable despite there being a net increase in office accommodation within the site.

In summary, whilst the principle of providing new office accommodation is considered acceptable, particularly given the potential loss of the existing office accommodation, the impact of this scheme on local character, particularly in view of its scale, bulk and height, is considered unacceptable.

Background papers referred to during production of this report comprise all correspondence on the file refs set out in the Planning History section above, excluding exempt information.

RECOMMENDATION: APPLICATION BE REFUSED

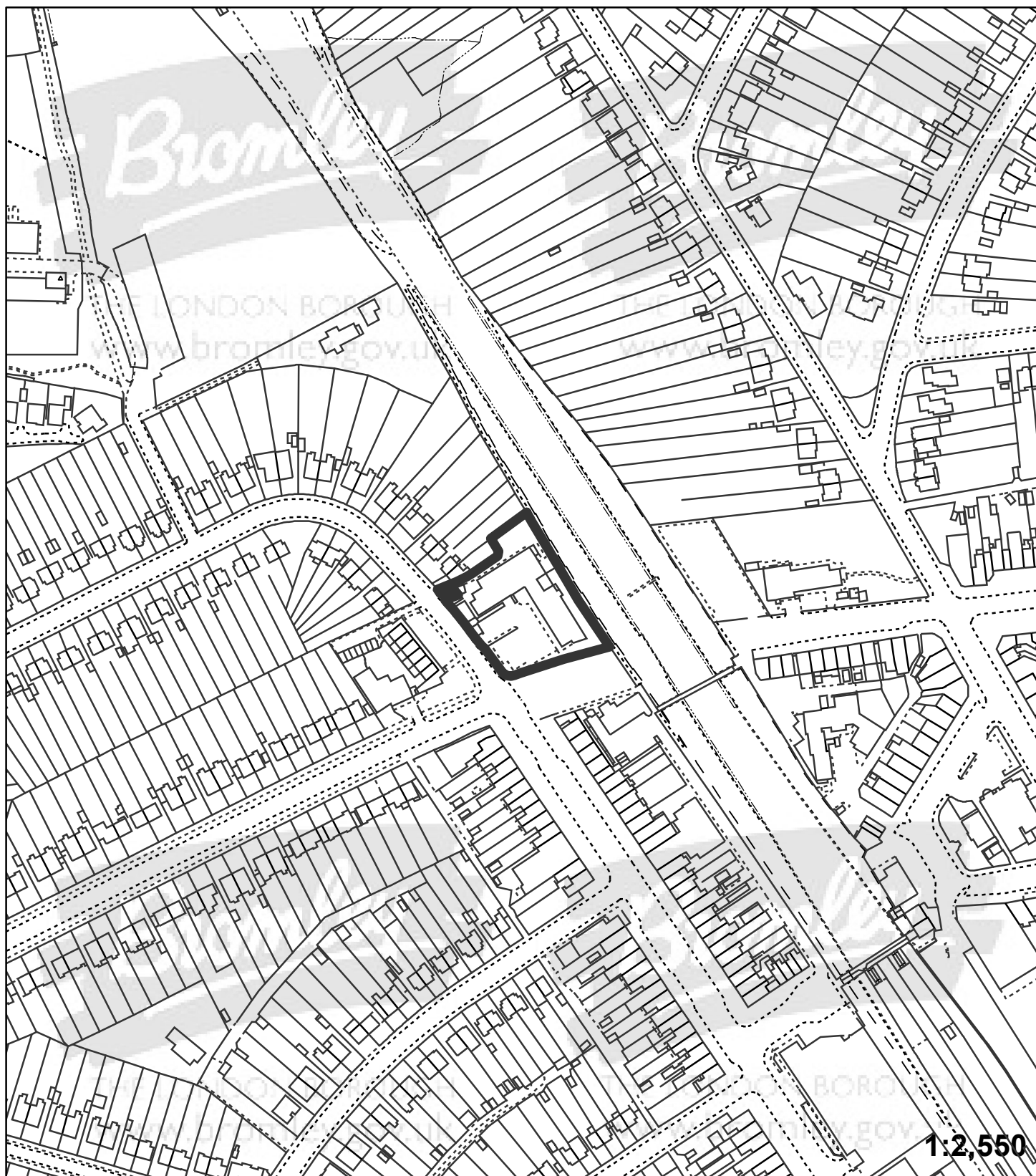
The reasons for refusal are:

- 1 The proposal, by reason of its excessive scale, bulk and height, would result in an overly prominent structure within the streetscene, which would adversely affect the visual amenities of the area, contrary to Policy BE1 of the Unitary Development Plan.

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Proposal: Erection of roof extension to form part fourth floor to provide office accommodation (Use Class B1(a)).



"This plan is provided to identify the location of the site and should not be used to identify the extent of the application site"

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