

Comments of Cllr. Douglas Auld to Plans Sub Committee 4
on 17th December 2015, Concerning 9, Station Square,
BR5 1LY. Application No. 15/03834/FULL1

Chairman

Station Square itself is at the centre of the Station Square, Petts Wood Conservation Area.

The planning officer's recommendation is to refuse this application. That recommendation and the grounds for it are shown at page 127.

In September this year I spoke against a similar application from the same applicant in respect of the same property. That application was refused on the general grounds of 1 unacceptable overlooking of neighbouring residential properties. 2 an overdevelopment of the site out of character with the locality and harmful to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. 3. failure to provide sufficient on-street parking. Contrary to policies BE1, H7, BE11, BE1 and T3 of the Unitary Development Plan. This evening I shall speak against this fresh application

The only variations between the two are that the rear-facing windows have now been relocated onto the northern side elevation and privacy screens have been added to the rear of the balconies to prevent undue overlooking of neighbouring properties. I accept that the first ground for objection in the earlier application in respect of overlooking has been overcome. However to my mind grounds for refusal 2. and 3. for that application remain valid in addition to the grounds for refusal now recommended by the planning officer.

The proposal states that no parking is proposed for the development but adds rather loosely that there would appear to be space for two or three vehicles at the rear of the extension accessed from the rear service road, although the agent confirms that this is of an informal nature and is not currently used by the occupier of the existing flat.

It is not a service road, it is not even a lane. It is a rutted track. I know this 'service road' particularly well having dealt with a few matters in relation to it in the last three years. Some days it is possible to drive nearly the whole length of it but on others it is impossible, I would emphasize it is a service road, lane, track, whatever, serving the restaurants and shops on that side of Station Square, To suggest there would be additional parking available at this location is a myth.

In this report the Highways Engineer, at the top of page 123, seems to find it acceptable that no car parking spaces are to be provided. This is different from his comment for the earlier application when he stated that it would be preferable for car parking spaces to be provided. Why the change? The Highway Engineer goes on to say that the nearby Petts Wood Road and West Way some 500 to 600metres away have some free parking. I know this situation is about to alter as it is intended in the near future to change these fourteen free spaces to metered bays.

I have been a Ward Councillor in Petts Wood for nine years and have an excellent knowledge of local parking demands and difficulties. For the last five/six years the

local councillors, council officers, shop keepers and residents have worked together to achieve a balance of parking in central Petts Wood, taking into account the needs of residents, shop keepers and commuters. This has involved at least two public surveys and a great number of fine tuning amendments to reach the final scheme. If parking was difficult before it has become stretched to the limit with the opening of a branch of Sainsbury's and a number of quality restaurants, in this part of Station Square in the last two or three years. Without parking being available these businesses and the other surrounding shops would not survive. There is already a constant and increasing demand for more parking space. On the basis of these facts I disagree with the comments made by the Highways Engineer

Most of Station Square is metered and heavily parked. Turning right out of the service road at the rear of 9, Station Square, Petts Wood Road is single and double yellow lined for a minimum of five hundred yards. I have already mentioned that the fourteen free parking spaces there are to be converted to meter bays. West Way is fully parked day and night. In any event when it is cold, wet and windy who would want to park 500/600metres away and walk when it is possible to park near to home notwithstanding this would cause more obstruction.

The application site is in a Conservation Area. The scheme is to convert one flat into two and to build two additional flats in a new extension to the rear. Thus it is proposed to build the maximum possible number of flats, four, in a very tight and restricted area. The proposal states the communal amenity space would be located on the flat roof between the main building and the extension. The dimensions are not given but from the orientation of the two buildings this area would only receive minimum sun and natural light for a brief period each day.

While the proposed level of density for the four flats is within the threshold of the London Plan this has to be assessed against the character and spatial standards of the surrounding area.

While I believe it would be possible to have two flats at the location the current application would result in an overdevelopment of the site and would result in a crammed appearance, harmful to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area..

The Environment Health (Housing) Department at page 123, paras. 5 and 6 raise concerns about the lack of any window in the bedroom of flat 3, the obstruction of natural light to bedroom 2 of both flats 2 and 4 and in addition the inadequate means of escape from bedroom 2 of flat 2, in the event of a fire,

The Environment Health (Pollution) Department raise concerns that no details of a ventilation system have been submitted to support the proposed change of the ground floor premises to Class A3 restaurants/café use, in the absence of which, the proposals could cause harm to the amenities of neighbouring residential properties. Presumably primarily by smells and odours.

These concerns from the Environment Health Departments, with which I totally agree, are repeated in the planning officer's conclusion

I propose that the application be refused on the following grounds :-

Unacceptable standard of accommodation	policy BE1 of the UDP
Absence of details of the proposed ventilation system	policy S9 of the UDP
Overdevelopment of the site, out of character, harmful to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area	policies H7, BE11 & BE1 of the UDP
Insufficient or non existent on-site parking leading to on-street parking pressures.	policy T3 of the UDP

Thank you Chairman.