

Substantive response

Substantive response from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to the local planning authority (LPA) as a statutory consultee.

To LPA	Bromley
LPA planning ref no	21/05907/OUT
Our ref	pgo-0824
Site address	The Walnuts Shopping Centre High Street Orpington
Proposal description	Demolition of existing buildings and comprehensive redevelopment of the site to provide a mixed use scheme. Full planning permission is sought for the construction of part of Block A (A1 and A2) (max height 126.18m AOD), part of the podium at ground and first floor of Block A3, and the public realm throughout the Site. Block A (A1 and A2) will provide 251 residential units and 908.6 sqm of Use Class E (a), (b) and Sui Generis floorspace. Outline permission with all matters reserved is sought for the redevelopment of the remainder site consisting of the construction of blocks (Blocks A3 to F) ranging from 4 to 19 storeys (maximum height 126.18m AOD) with Blocks A-C connected to a podium (above existing ground floor); provision of up to 4,806 sqm (GIA) of Use Class E (a), (b) and Sui Generis floorspace, up to 9,434 sqm (GIA) of Use Class E (d) floorspace, up to 903.9 sqm (GIA) of Use Class E (f) floorspace and up to 990 residential units (Class C2 / C3) with associated private and community garden areas and amenity spaces (including balconies / terraces), associated car parking and all other associated works including demolition of existing buildings and enabling works.
Date on fire statement	17/12/2021
Date application received	24/01/2022
Date response sent	14/02/2022

Headline response from HSE

Headline Response from HSE ('Advice to LPA' - Significant Concern)

1. Substantive response

Thank you for consulting HSE about the above application.

◀ Nature of Response Advice provided to the planning authority Nature of Response ▶

Scope of consultation

1.1 It is noted that the above consultation is in relation to a hybrid planning application. This is comprised of a full planning application relating to blocks A1 and A2 and part of block A3; and an outline planning application relating to blocks A3 to block F. As there is presently insufficient fire safety information available in relation to the outline planning application, HSE is unable to comment fully on the outline application.

1.2 Should the Local Planning Authority be minded to grant permission for the hybrid application, we strongly recommend the following:

- the planning permission is subject to a suitable condition requiring the submission of a satisfactory fire statement with any reserved matters application, and
- that HSE (Planning Gateway One) is consulted in conjunction with the Local Planning Authority's consideration of any reserved matters application.

This would ensure that the purpose of HSE being made a statutory consultee for such applications is achieved.

Means of escape and fire service access

1.3 It is noted that blocks A1, A2 and A3 have proposed storey heights of 67.18m, 57.13m and 66.35m respectively; and that these blocks will be served by single firefighting shafts constituting both the firefighting stair and escape stair.

1.4 The fire safety design guide cited in the fire statement (BS 9991) states that where a building has a storey above 50m, a design review may be needed to determine whether the fire safety provisions are appropriate. Given that the proposed buildings have storey heights exceeding 50m, the LPA should satisfy itself that a design review has been undertaken. From the documentation included with the application it is not immediately obvious that a review has been undertaken, such that it has informed the design of the scheme.

- 1.5 A design review should assess the implications of fire safety systems failure or foreseeable events. This may include the potential for fire conditions to deteriorate, thereby requiring immediate building evacuation concurrently with firefighting operations in the single stair. This matter may be the subject of later regulatory consideration which may result in changes affecting land use planning considerations.
- 1.6 It is noted that the stairs in block C1, C2 and C3 serve the covered car park; and that the stairs in each block constitute single staircases serving flats. A common staircase forming part of the only escape route from a flat should not serve a covered car park. This is necessary to ensure that fire and/or smoke from a car park fire cannot enter the staircase and compromise the escape route and firefighting operations. Resolving this issue may affect land use planning considerations such as layout and appearance of the building and car parking provision.
- 1.7 Similarly, it is unclear how firefighters would fight a fire in the covered car park adjacent to block A. Firefighters may not wish to use the rising mains in the staircases to access water, as to do so would necessitate opening the door to the stairs, and the door to the car park on fire, and wedging these open with fire hose. This would allow smoke and/or fire from a car park fire to enter the single escape route from the upper floors. However, if firefighters enter the car park from the vehicle access point, it appears that hose laying distances are too great to allow effective firefighting.
- 1.8 Likewise, the fire statement states in relation to the car park in block D: '*Fire-fighting operations block D1 and D2 will be carried out from a protected core fitted with a wet fire main (as under 18m in height). Fire-fighting operations within existing car park will be carried out from two protected cores fitted with a wet fire main*'. Again, fighting a car park fire from a protected core, would necessitate opening the doors separating the stairs from the car park and may allow the ingress of smoke into the single means of escape from upper floors. Resolving this issue may affect land use planning considerations such as layout and appearance of the building and car parking provision.
- 1.9 Section 8 of the fire statement states in relation to fire service vehicle access: '*In some instances the distance between the parking position and the firefighting shaft entrance (e.g. block E1) or distance between firefighting shaft entrance and firefighting lift door (e.g. block A1) exceeds the recommended 18m. As the firefighters are considered in place of relative safety within the protected corridor it is considered reasonable for one of the distances to be exceeded on a basis that the total distance between parking position and firefighting lift entrance is within 36m (18m + 18m)*'.

- 1.10 In a building fitted with a wet fire main there should be access for a fire appliance to within 18m of, and within sight of, a suitable entrance giving access to the wet fire main; and fire service vehicle access within sight of the inlet for the emergency replenishment of the water tank for the wet fire main. Additionally, due to firefighting safety considerations, the horizontal and vertical distances that firefighters have to travel to fight a fire, or rescue a casualty, must be limited. Resolving this issue may affect land use planning considerations such as layout and appearance of the building.
- 1.11 Ground floor plan drawings appear to show that there is no way of accessing the firefighting shaft at ground floor level in building C3, other than via the car park. Access to a firefighting shaft at the access level should be either directly from outside, or via a fire protected corridor. Resolving this issue may affect land use planning considerations such as layout and appearance of the building.

2 Supplementary information

The following points do not contribute to HSE's overall headline response and are intended only for guidance/clarification purposes. These comments identify items that may have implications for planning and could usefully be considered now.

- 2.1 Plan drawings show car parking spaces immediately adjacent to the external wall of block A3. There is insufficient information on the proposed construction of this external wall to determine whether a car fire in this location could spread into the building via flat windows on the elevation above. Further engineering analysis may be required to assess this risk of fire spread. Such analysis may affect land use planning considerations such as the appearance of the building and car parking provision.
- 2.2 Plan drawings show windows of adjacent flats in close proximity and at right angles to each other. This proximity and angle may allow fire spread between flats. The fire safety design guide cited in the fire statement (BS 9991) is currently under review and a draft of a revised version has been published. The draft version of the standard contains provisions relating to the angle and proximity of adjacent flat windows. Whilst this is a draft version of the design standard, and cannot presently be relied on, it may be the extant standard at time of construction. Consequently, further consideration of this issue during later regulatory consideration may result in changes affecting land use planning considerations such the appearance of the building.
- 2.3 Plan drawings indicate that roof levels will include the provision of bio-diverse roofs and solar panels. There is insufficient information provided to assess whether the fire risks posed by green roofs and solar panels, and the interaction between the two, has been considered.

14/02/2022

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Bryan', is written over a solid black horizontal line.

Signed by: Jon Bryan

This substantive response provides fire safety advice to the local planning authority. It's based on the information provided as it relates to land use planning.

This response does not provide advice on any of the following:

- **matters that are or will be subject to Building Regulations regardless of whether such matters have been provided as part of the application**
- **matters related to planning applications around major hazard sites, licensed explosive sites and pipelines**
- **applications for hazardous substances consent**
- **London Plan policy compliance**