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F.A.O Matthew Pullen

Our Ref: LG/ATG

By email & Post

Dear Sir/Madam

Representations on behalf of Chesterhouse Properties (Lewisham) Ltd to Lewisham Town Centre Local Plan – Submission Version (September 2012)

On behalf of our client, Chesterhouse Properties (Lewisham) Ltd we welcome the opportunity to comment on the Submission Version of the Lewisham Town Centre Area Action Plan, which was submitted to the Secretary of State on 28 September 2012 in advance of an Examination to be held in public. Our client retains an interest in the retail element of the Thurston Road redevelopment, which is currently being progressed by London & Quadrant Housing.

Thurston Road – Site S4

The Thurston Road site forms a key component of the wider regeneration of Lewisham Town Centre. It was granted outline planning permission in 2008 and subsequently extended in March 2012. The proposed development comprises 6,771 sq m of retail floorspace; 9 live/work units and 406 new homes. Discussions are currently ongoing with Lewisham Borough Council in advance of submitting reserved matters and commencing development on site, which is scheduled for March 2013. Once complete the development affords the opportunity to significantly enhance the vitality and viability of Lewisham Town Centre, through the provision of new residential units and high quality retail space, fit to attract a major new anchor retailer to the town.

The Retail Strategy for Lewisham Town Centre

Our client supports the broad vision and strategy for regenerating Lewisham Town Centre, in particular the aspiration to strengthen its role as a retail destination. It is therefore important that the policies contained within the Local Plan for Lewisham Town Centre reflect the need to raise its status as a shopping destination and attract inward investment that will enable it to achieve the Council's aspiration of becoming a town centre of 'Metropolitan' significance within the wider London hierarchy of Centres.

In recognition of the aspiration to raise the status of the town centre, the additional retail floorspace (47,350 sq m to 2026) proposed, which exceeds the Core Strategy provision of 40,000 is welcomed, and is further justified on the basis of additional housing within the town centre – raising from 2,500 as allocated in the Core Strategy to 3,100 new homes by 2021. Lewisham needs to achieve a ‘step-change’ in the quantum and quality of retail provision if it is going to be able to attract shoppers from nearby competing centres and retain a greater percentage of expenditure from within its direct catchment.

In order to achieve that step change and act as a catalyst for the wider regenerative benefits that will follow it is essential to attract new ‘destination’ retailers into the town, facilitate pedestrian movement between them, and maximise the opportunity for investment. Key to that is ensuring the delivery of important regeneration sites by developing planning policies that are sufficiently flexible to respond to market/tenant demand and avoid excluding certain types of retailers, which could ultimately result in vacancies within the town.

We welcome the identification of our client’s site, Site S4 as a major development site in the town centre. The site offers the opportunity to attract a major retailer that can act as an anchor to this new enhanced part of Lewisham, intercept car borne traffic, and then encourage pedestrian movement to other parts of the town. Commonly referred to as the ‘dumb-bell effect’ and advocated in the Best Practice Guidance to accompany Planning Policy Statement 4, Thurston Road offers the opportunity to act as an anchor at the opposing end of the town centre to the Lewisham Centre. This would create two distinct destinations at either end of the retail circuit, creating footfall between the two to the benefit of existing businesses and investment in between.

The Council’s proposed approach seems to stop short of achieving this opportunity. Extending the Primary Shopping Area (PSA) north is welcomed, but as currently drawn the PSA is very small for a ‘Major Town Centre’, and extending the PSA no further than Lewisham Gateway essentially severs off Thurston Road, and the wider Loampit Vale proposals as ‘secondary’ or edge-of-centre. We believe there is an opportunity to broaden the extent of the PSA to extend over Loampit Vale to Site S4 – utilising the railway as the boundary, and ensuring that the existing bulky-goods units beyond remain edge of centre and subject to the impact and sequential tests set out in the NPPF. This would allow the Lewisham Centre and Thurston Road to act as major attractions at either end of a defined retail circuit, with the Gateway Site benefitting from a privileged position between the two at the point of greatest footfall. This would facilitate the regeneration and pedestrian enhancements sought by the Council in the Loampit Vale area, and create sufficient floorspace to attract the volume of retail sought to raise the status of Lewisham to a town centre of Metropolitan significance.

As a key ‘Gateway’ site that marks the entrance to the town centre, Site S4 is extremely important in terms of defining Lewisham’s image as a successful retail destination. It is the first site many will see when travelling from the west, and therefore it is important not only in townscape terms but also in terms of attracting investment, and making the right statement for Lewisham. Failing to provide sufficiently flexible policies could result in making it difficult to attract a tenant to this unit, which would in turn completely undermine the appearance and the Council’s wider aspirations to regenerate this area as an enhanced pedestrian corridor and key space in the town – something that can only be achieved by footfall, and an anchor tenant of sufficient gravitas to attract people to this part of town. Including the site within the PSA would ensure the aspiration is achieved.

Loampit Vale

Our client supports the proposal to deliver 1,000 new homes and 11,200 sq m of retail across Sites 3a; 3b; 4; and 5. Our client also supports the Council's proposals to locate a flexible range of A1, A2, A3, B1, D1 and D2 uses on the ground floor of all blocks. However, the Local Plan wording goes on to state that these uses should complement rather than compete with existing town centre uses located in the Central Town Centre Area. Such wording is unnecessary and unsound, on the grounds of its suitability and flexibility. It serves to suggest that our client's site, and Loampit Vale should not attract a major successful retailer – and that any retail should be secondary in nature, so as to not detract from the existing centre. Furthermore it is in conflict with the strategic objective of regenerating the area, and creating an important space/pedestrian environment. Only a major destination retailer would guarantee attracting sufficient footfall to achieve these wider aspirations for Loampit Vale. The Council appear to be seeking to control the form of retail development, or even the actual brand of retailer/ occupier, thus limiting our client's opportunity to attract an appropriate tenant that can act as a catalyst to regenerating this part of Lewisham.

We consider Policy LAAP4 to be unsound in its current form. It seeks to ensure development of Loampit Vale complements the Lewisham Centre, and seeks to prevent any form of convenience retail floorspace. We cannot see the justification for such a restrictive proposal, given the identified need for additional convenience floorspace in the Council's retail assessment, and that no other site is specifically identified to deliver convenience goods. Best Practice Guidance saved by the Government, and formerly supplementary to PPS4 highlights that major supermarkets, and convenience retailers are best located on the edge of a major centre, so as to intercept what is often a greater proportion of car-borne traffic. Thurston Road is ideally suited to fulfil that role. Furthermore, it is comparison retailers that rely on each other to create a critical mass sufficient to attract footfall. A supermarket can do that in its own right – hence often being located as an anchor on the edge of a town centre. With the exception of major department stores, standalone comparison retailers would prefer to be located in the very centre of the town where the greatest footfall exists.

Lewisham Borough Council, should consider the successful approach of other centres and seek to ensure development is comprehensive and led by market forces, not piecemeal and overly prescribed to maximise the opportunity afforded to one site at the expense of another. Loampit Vale should not be seen as an extension to the existing bulky goods retailers to the West. It should be seen as fundamental in announcing the start of the town centre with a key retailer of sufficient gravitas to anchor this part of town. Proposing to make it complimentary, or prevent convenience goods will only serve to stifle investment opportunities and increase the risk of vacant floorspace. If as our client suggests above, Loampit Vale is included within a wider PSA, placing such restrictions would be unsound as contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); Policy 2.15 of the London Plan, and Core Strategy Policy 6, all of which direct all forms of retail to defined town centres. Annex 2 of the NPPF clearly defines a Town Centre. For retail purposes, the PSA effectively constitutes 'in centre' – i.e. the defined area where retail use is concentrated.

If Loampit Vale is not included within the PSA – it would be considered as an 'edge of centre' retail location. Annex 2 of the NPPF states that edge-of-centre sites are defined as 'a location that is well connected to, and up to 300m from the Primary Shopping Area'. In such locations the sequential assessment is to be applied on a case by case basis in accordance with Paragraph 24 of the NPPF. This states that Local Authorities should '*require applications for main town centre uses to be located in town centres, then in edge-of-centre locations, and only if suitable sites are not available should*

out of centre sites be considered. When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre'. In addition Paragraph 26 requires Local Authorities to request an impact assessment if the development proposed is for a town centre use outside of a town centre (in centre) or not in accordance with an up-to-date development plan. In this context, any such any proposal to extend/change the nature of retail would be subject to both the sequential and impact tests.

Retail proposals are required to deliver economic investment that would enhance the vitality and viability of a town centre. There is no reason to suggest that convenience retail at Loampit Vale would fail to enhance the vitality/viability of Lewisham, given the identified need for convenience floorspace, and lack of any specifically allocated site. If such a proposal failed to do so, or highlighted a negative impact upon planned investment it can be refused against the policies of the NPPF, Policy 2.15 of the London Plan, or Policy 6 of the Core Strategy. Part one of Policy LAAP4 is pre-empting such a decision, and is unsound on the basis that it contravenes the retail policies of the NPPF; London Plan and adopted Core Strategy.

Part 2 of Policy LAAP4 is also considered to be unsound on the grounds of flexibility. This lists a number of design aspirations to guide the nature of development. However, use of the word 'must' in (a); (b) and (e) is too restrictive, and should be replaced with the word 'should' to allow for all circumstances to occur. In particular this applies to (e) whereby stating that buildings 'must' incorporate communal heating and cooling systems fails to consider whether that may actually be the most viable option for achieving sustainable forms of development, or reducing carbon emissions. Furthermore, it fails to take account of whether such systems are financially viable, which is particularly inappropriate in the current economic climate, and could stifle development from actually progressing.

To ensure that the Local Plan is sound we advise that Policy LAAP4 should be amended as follows:

1. The Loampit Vale Town Centre Area is designated for mixed use development. ~~All proposals will be required to complement the Lewisham Gateway Town Centre Area, as follows:~~

(a) uses located on the ground floor and ~~possibly~~ where appropriate first floor ~~will need to~~ should be within retail (A1, A2, A3), business (B1) and community (D1, D2) uses, which will complement rather than compete with existing town centre uses located in the Central Town Centre Area. Conversion of comparison retail provision to convenience retail provision will not be considered acceptable,

(b) additional storeys will provide residential uses across a range of dwelling types and sizes in this highly accessible location

2. All proposals ~~will be required to~~ should seek to deliver the following priorities:

(a) ~~the ground floor must provide an~~ active frontages and strong built edges proportionate to the town centre location, especially facing Loampit Vale,

(b) buildings ~~must be~~ of an appropriate scale, which are mindful of the immediate context and the importance of Loampit Vale as a major route without trying to compete with Lewisham Gateway,

(c) a high quality public realm ~~is to be provided~~ by ensuring a consistent and coordinated treatment of materials and street furniture ~~and that will substantially improve~~ key pedestrian and cycle routes along Loampit Vale, Thurston Road, Jerrard Street and north – south routes that link to the surrounding residential areas,

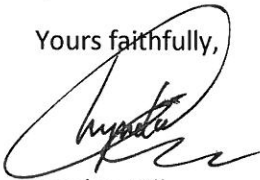
(d) generous tree lined pavements of ~~at approximately least~~ 6 to 8 metres in width to create boulevards,

(e) ~~buildings must~~ incorporate sustainable technology, and construction methods aimed at reducing carbon emissions and energy consumption, and where appropriate accommodate communal heating and cooling systems and facilitate the Town Centre Area becoming a decentralised energy hub.

3. The site is situated within Flood Zone 3a High Probability. Applicants will need to prepare a Flood Risk Assessment in support of each application for development to accord with the principles set out in the National Planning Policy Framework comply with Core Strategy Policy 10 and work closely with the Environment Agency to ensure proposals will deliver a positive reduction in flood risk. A The Flood Risk Assessment submitted for each the site will need to be submitted that clearly and concisely summarises demonstrate how the a reduction in flood risk will be delivered.

We trust these representations will be given due consideration, and we would be grateful to be kept informed of future consultation, and of the timetable for the forthcoming examination, whereby we reserve the opportunity to submit a statement, and represent our client as necessary.

Yours faithfully,



Lyndon Gill
DIRECTOR

cc. Richard Ashford - Chesterhouse Properties (Lewisham) Ltd