

Prestwich Village Neighbourhood Forum

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29th February 2024

Re: Longfield Centre Redevelopment

Case Reference: 70449

This response is being submitted on behalf of Prestwich Village Neighbourhood Forum and is an attempt to identify the main issues that residents and businesses have raised about this application. As a Forum we are still at an early stage of our existence and are only starting our preparation of our Neighbourhood Plan. It is not possible therefore for us to state whether this scheme conflicts with what that plan will contain. Nevertheless, several of the issues that we have raised below are ones that we will be taking into consideration in our preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Before setting out these issues we would like to express our disappointment at the consultation process for commenting on the planning application. The timescale for public consultation has been quite short for such a major application and it has had limited publicity. Many people have contacted us complaining that they had not heard anything about it until raised on by our group and other community Facebook forums.

Comments / Queries on the Scheme

Density / Residential

1. The scheme proposes a very dense development, more akin to something that might be found in a city centre, not a suburban location. We don't feel that this reflects the feedback from the consultation events where it was clear that residents did not want lots of apartments in multi storey blocks. The revised masterplan indicated residential at no more than 4 stories high with an inference that there would be a greater mix of apartments and housing. This has not been

reflected in the application, indeed there is an indication that the buildings will be 6-7 stories high.

2. There are a large number of small apartments and very few houses proposed, which again would be more appropriate for a city centre location rather than a suburban town centre. This type of residential is unlikely to be attractive to those who wish to establish roots in the area or wish to relocate within the existing area. This could include downsizers (who generally want private car parking) and also to single and working couples who may need or want regular access to a car, even if they are working from home. It therefore, raises the question as to what groups the residential is aimed at and who will develop them. We do not want to see residential similar to the model developed in many city centre and fringe locations, which are investor driven, aimed at single and transient groups, with complex ownership, leasing and management arrangements. We want a stable thriving community to improve the well-being of the local resident population and to sustain the independent businesses.

Transport, parking and accessibility

3. There are 359 car parking spaces within the Fairfax Road and Longfield surface level car parks. A total of 283 public car parking space are proposed in the redevelopment (275 in the Travel hub and 8 adjacent to the Community hub). Given that 37 of the spaces in the Travel hub are proposed to be dedicated to the residential flats, this will mean a provision of 246 public spaces, a reduction of 31%. However, there are no plans to show how this decrease in public parking will be managed, particularly regarding its impact on the surrounding roads. Is the new multi-storey car park going to be subject to charging and if so, what form might this take?
4. The application makes reference to a Travel Hub, but in reality, this is just a multi-storey car park, with just a few cycle lock ups. The northern end of the MSCP is quite a distance from other forms of transport (bus stops on BNR, the Metrolink Stop and the Community Hub) so it is difficult to see how it will deliver integrated and sustainable transport around and to the Centre.

5. The provision of car parking and transport proposals generally are based on a number of speculative assumptions about how visitors to the centre and occupiers of the flats might behave. For example, there is an assumption in the supporting documentation that the travel hub will be used by people visiting the centre in the daytime and night-time users and occupiers of the flats in the evening. However, some flat owners may choose to park their cars all day in the car park as may users of the Metrolink. The Parking and data document supplied with the application makes reference to the fact that 46% of vehicles parking in the centre park for less than 2 hours and then uses this to make an inference that these people will change their behaviour (and presumably not park in the centre), but changing people's behaviour takes time and without more evidence based work, there are real concerns that the current transport and parking proposals won't work. There is a need for greater clarity in respect to the strategic plan that will successfully deliver the expected increase in active travel.

Retail and community buildings

6. If the health centre does not relocate into the Community hub, then there will be a very large reduction in community space within this scheme and it is not clear who would occupy the upper floors. Offices are suggested, but this may not be appropriate (even if an occupier is identified). There is already a significant loss of community space in the scheme now proposed compared to the amount of community space in the Longfield Centre and existing library. The relocation of the existing health centre into the Community hub should be an absolutely essential part of this development. It is also not clear from the plans how the community hub will be serviced, is this from a service yard next to the 8 car parking spaces provided for this building?
7. The design of the market hall looks good but there is no information supplied with the application as to the operating model of the market. Who will own the building and who will operate it? Some recently developed markets have not been a success, so what will happen to this building if a market is not viable? It is also not clear how it will be serviced.

8. The scheme shows a similar amount of retail space as currently available but are the proposed units suitable for existing independents and offering them an opportunity for expansion –whether national traders such as Iceland and the Halifax will have space in the new scheme. There is no information about how traders will be able to continue to trade during construction. The independent traders are the strength of Prestwich Village and we believe it is imperative that they are supported to sustain their businesses successfully during the transitional phases of the redevelopment.

Public Realm

The stretch of Poppythorn Lane between the Radius and Poppythorn Lane is very narrow, has no trees and could end up an unattractive wind tunnel.

There is no clarity as to how the 'open space' area will be developed to offer opportunities for residents and shoppers to rest, relax, meet up, nor is there any evidence what will be provided in the open space for children so as they become engaged with the village and play and enjoy the space. What will be provided to ensure there are opportunities for entertainment events during inclement weather?

Conclusion

This is a once in a lifetime chance to regenerate the Centre of Prestwich and provide a high-quality development that also respects the surrounding area and can kick-start the development of other smaller sites and poor-quality buildings in the Centre.

There is a danger that an underperforming and unattractive part of the Village could be replaced with a similar or reduced amount of retail as exists at the moment; some upgraded public realm; a 'community hub' that contains little more than a library; large amounts of small flats (resulting in similar problems to those that occurred with the Radius), a multi storey car park that does not provide effective links to trams or buses, existing poor quality health services and even more traffic congestion and parking problems on surrounding roads.

There is a considerable amount of work that has clearly gone into this application and we are pleased to note that there is a proposed 40% biodiversity gain and all new

buildings will have an EPC Rating of A; the design of many of the buildings in blocks A, B & C, look generally good but further work needs to be done to strengthen their links to the heritage of Prestwich Village and much more focus needs to be placed on the transport and parking arrangements and the outline part of the scheme needs a re-think.

The Forum therefore seeks further clarity before it can provide definitive support or objection to the planning application