

**Statement of Community Involvement**  
**Proposed Residential Development at 61 The Avenue, Beckenham, Kent**  
**14 August 2014**



59A The Avenue



67 Downs Hill

## 1. Introduction

This report, a Statement of Community Involvement, has been produced by *Consultation Matters* on behalf of the client, Mr Mooney, who is proposing to redevelop the corner site at 61 The Avenue in Beckenham, Kent. The report sets out the scope of the consultation process we have undertaken, and summarises the results, including a record of all responses received to-date.

The existing building is in a poor state of repair and it is not an option to refurbish the property. Several options have been considered but the proposal is to demolish and replace the existing property with two separate buildings, each containing four high quality flats.

The developer and his architect have a long standing reputation and have completed many high quality residential schemes in South London. 61 The Avenue is a sensitive site located in a conservation area and as a result Mr Mooney took the decision to invest in a pre-planning consultation with Bromley Council and to appoint *Consultation Matters* to co-ordinate a community consultation with local residents prior to submitting a planning application. *Consultation Matters* was appointed in June 2014.

## 2. Proposals

The proposed scheme has been designed so that it is sympathetic to the style and scale of adjacent properties, with the two proposed buildings continuing the line of the existing houses in The Avenue and in Downs Hill. The aim is to minimise visual impact by retaining the mature trees that currently border the site.

Access to the buildings has been carefully considered and three separate entrances are proposed. This was considered to be the best solution for the residents in the new flats and for neighbours: to maximise the number of parking spaces on site; to allow vehicles to enter and depart in forward gear; to avoid large areas of parking; and to retain as much landscaping as possible.

The design proposals allow for 12 dedicated parking spaces on site, i.e. one parking space for each of the eight flats plus four additional spaces. This is a higher ratio of parking per flat than was recommended by Bromley Council (in line with government policy) but was considered by the design team as beneficial to the residents of the new flats and to neighbours.



### 3. Methodology

*Consultation Matters* was appointed in June 2014 to co-ordinate a programme of community consultation in preparation for a planning application to redevelop the site at 61 The Avenue, Beckenham.

The aim of the consultation was to engage with local residents in The Avenue and Downs Hill in order to identify any concerns at an early stage and to address as many of them as possible in the final proposals, prior to any planning application.

The consultation comprised a letter drop to approximately 80 households in West Oak, The Avenue and Downs Hill. The letter (included at Appendix 1) explained the plans to redevelop the site and encouraged residents to get in touch with any questions or concerns. We included an open invitation to meet with the architect to talk through the proposals in more detail.

Consultation Matters received a handful of emails and phone calls from residents in response to the letter drop. Three follow up meetings with residents took place during the week beginning 4 August. The proposals were also promoted and the letter featured on the website of the Ravensbourne Preservation Society. <http://www.rvpsbromley.org/61-the-avenue.php>

We met with nine residents during the three follow up meetings, which were an opportunity for the architect to talk through the latest proposals (developed following the pre-planning meeting with Bromley Council).

We have received feedback from residents in West Oak, The Avenue and Downs Hill. Their comments and concerns, together with the design team's responses are documented in the next section of this report. Individual names and contact details are withheld for reasons of data protection.



## 4. Resident Feedback

### i. Visual Impact

We talked through the latest plans and proposed designs at the meetings with residents. We have also emailed copies of the proposals so they could be shared at subsequent residents' meetings. The elevation drawings, illustrating the style and exterior of the proposed buildings, appeared to receive a fairly positively response. Comments and queries were as follows:

*'The design looks sympathetic to the surrounding houses and it would be beneficial to local people to have the site tidied up.'*

*'The designs look like they are in-keeping with existing buildings. But the retention of the existing trees and landscaping of the perimeter of the building is absolutely critical. We don't want to be looking at a stark new building.'*

*'I would still prefer to see two houses on the site instead of flats. Also, I'm not sure about the height of the two buildings – are the plans to scale?'*

*'We [Downs Hill residents] are concerned about our gardens being overlooked by the windows in the roofs of the new building. It looks like this might be the case.'*

*'There are some very bad examples of new blocks of flats. We really don't want those here. I am most concerned about what it is going to look like from the street. We don't want to look at a stark monstrosity.'*

*'Can I just be clear, the first building you see when you come into The Avenue is on the existing footprint?'*

*'The landscape scheme should be deeply sympathetic to the environment. The new residents won't want to look at us any more than we want to look at them. The trees and what we see is a big deal.'*

Design team's response on Visual Impact:

- We have looked at all options and sought pre application advice from Bromley Council and have concluded that two buildings, accommodating four high quality flats in each, is the best outcome for the development site. It is not commercially viable to refurbish the existing property or to replace it with a single house and two houses would not be feasible due to the triangular shape of the site.
- We are planning to retain as many of the existing trees as possible. This will contribute to the local environment and will provide privacy for residents and screening from the road.
- We have taken into account a number of additional considerations because of the site being in a conservation area. Our intention is to add something positive to the streetscape as well as bringing the site back into use.
- We have chosen to have 3 separate car park access points as this will limit the amount of hard-standing and therefore allow the maximum soft planting area. It will also allow us to thread the driveways between the existing mature trees along the boundary, retaining all of them rather than having to form a wider access point.

## ii. Proposed Road Improvements

Many residents were concerned about the developer's offer to 'improve' the unmade road following construction, to 'at least the current standard'. We thought this would be well-received by residents, but we have learned that the condition of road is a complex issue and there are conflicting views about whether the surface should be improved or not.

Some residents want it to remain exactly as it is, as it deters traffic and limits parking. Others are concerned about freeholder liability and have started a road fund with a view to it being improved to a certain standard. The design team was asked to draw up a detailed specification for their consideration.

*'We absolutely do not want the road surface to be improved - it will create a whole new set of problems including commuter parking, and the road being used as a short cut.'*

*'Albermarle Road was unmade at one time and now it is horrible.'*

*'The road surface has been continuously washed away by the rain and is in a terrible state.'*

*'An improved road surface will lead to an increase in traffic, which will make accidents more likely. If there is an accident the freeholders in The Avenue will be accountable and could be sued. On the other hand, the road needs regular maintenance to ensure road safety is not compromised and we would like to know what effect the development will have on this.'*

*'We are concerned about the road and the impact of the construction and the additional users on the road. The road owners only own the soil of the road [tbc] and we would like to know the outcome of any conversations with them.'*

*'We would like to see a detailed specification as to how you propose to make good the road so we can consider the proposals.'*

*'I would like to know how you propose to access the site during construction. If it is from Downs Hill then I am happier but do you know there is a weight restriction of 5 tonnes on The Avenue?' [tbc]*

### Design team's response on Proposed Road Improvements:

- The developer is in discussions with the owners of the road in order to ascertain what can be accommodated.
- Our aim is to make good the road surface following construction – to at least as good a standard as it is currently.
- We are investigating options for the surface of the roadway to see if we can improve its stability for the long term.

### iii. Parking and Entrances

We received comments about the number of parking spaces provided and queries about the proposals for three separate entrances to the site.

*'I really don't think 12 spaces for 8 flats is enough and expect on street parking to be a problem.'*

*'Is parking for 12 cars sufficient for 8 flats? I am concerned that guest parking will spill out onto the road which will mean you're obliged to drive down the middle of the road which is the most damaged part. Can the road owner restrict parking or allow the developer to do so around the boundary of the site – perhaps with signage or bollards or boulders?'*

*'West Oak doesn't have enough parking as it is and we will get the overspill of guest parking outside our house.'*

*'We are concerned about the safety aspect of three separate entrances and would like a risk assessment to be carried out. Please prove to us that it is safe to have three entrances / exits on a corner.'*

Design team's response on Parking and Entrances:

- Bromley Council has a parking policy guided by central government which restricts the number of spaces provided per dwelling – the policy being to discourage car use. We have obtained pre application advice that the numbers being proposed meet those requirements. We are discussing roadside parking with the road owner.
- Following the consultation, the design team commissioned a highways consultant to review the safety aspect of three entrances as proposed. An extract of the report is as follows:

***'Having reviewed the access arrangements it is apparent that the use of driveways, as proposed, is in accordance with the existing arrangement for the majority properties along this road, including the property currently on the site and the properties in the vicinity of the site. It is also apparent that, unlike many properties along this road, suitable space is provided on the site to allow vehicles to enter and depart in forward gear without having to reverse onto, or from, The Avenue. It is considered that the provision of two additional driveways, as shown, would not have any material operational or road safety implications. Furthermore, due to the residential nature of The Avenue and the unmade nature of its surfacing, vehicle speeds along this road appear to be low.'***

***Based on this, it is apparent that suitable levels of visibility can be provided for drivers exiting each of the driveways and for drivers approaching the driveways on The Avenue, in accordance with relevant national design guidance. By trimming the vegetation along the site frontage, even greater levels of visibility would be attainable for drivers in this location. Based on the above review it is considered that the proposed access arrangements are appropriate for this location from both an operational and road safety perspective.'***

#### iv. Construction

We responded to a number of queries regarding Construction.

*'When is construction likely to start if you get planning consent?'*

*'What is your anticipated completion date if you are successful?'*

*'I would like to see restrictions in place for your construction vehicles – ideally on site.'*

*'I am concerned about noise and traffic disruption (and further damage to the road surface) during construction.'*

*'I am concerned about road closures / access (for residents and for emergency services) during construction particularly during utility works.'*

Design team's response on Construction:

- If we are successful with the planning application, construction is likely to begin around Spring next year.
- We anticipate a construction programme of approximately 12 months, aiming for completion in 2016.
- If we are successful, we would need to agree certain construction management points with Bromley Council. We would set up good lines of communication and ensure that there are contact numbers available for local residents.
- Road access will be maintained at all times. The utility companies are obliged to work within strict guidelines about road access.



#### v. Landscaping

The plans for landscaping were discussed in the context of Visual Impact, with comments as follows:

*'We don't want stark flashy. We want high end integrated.'*

*'Can you plant outside the boundary?'*

*'The smartest thing the developer can do is to plant mature trees outside the boundary – including the corner next to 59A - it is The Avenue, after all.'*



#### vi. Miscellaneous

*'The current power supply trips out regularly – it is overloaded. I am concerned that this would get worse with 8 additional flats using the supply.'*

Design team's response on Landscaping and Power Supply:

- We are looking at a number of landscape options and would like to involve residents in the discussions – particularly our immediate neighbours who might have specific requirements regarding fencing and planting. However, the planning authority is likely to request that a landscape plan is a condition of any planning consent i.e. this will come later if the planning application is successful.
- Any planting outside the site boundary will require permission from the road owner but we are happy to pursue this with them and present some ideas.
- We will investigate power supply and any issues if we get planning consent.

## 5. Next Steps

We have recorded and reviewed all feedback to-date and are finalising our designs, working towards a planning application.

The final designs will:

- address the requirements of Bromley Council (as highway and planning authority);
- wherever possible, adapt to address concerns expressed in this consultation document;
- be limited by what has been discussed / agreed with the road owner.

We are working hard to achieve a balance between all three.

A planning application will be submitted to Bromley Borough Council in August / September 2014.

If the application is successful, construction will commence in the Spring, with completion expected in 2016.

For further information on this report, please contact Linda Stevens, Consultation Matters Tel: 0207 307 3635 Mob: 07932 970 463 [linda.stevens@consultationmatters.co.uk](mailto:linda.stevens@consultationmatters.co.uk).



Thank you for your feedback to-date.

Appendix 1. Residents Letter

**Consultation Matters**

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Dear Residents

**Proposed residential development at 61 The Avenue, Beckenham**

We are writing to you on behalf of an established property development company, which is proposing to redevelop the corner site at 61 The Avenue in Beckenham.

The existing building is in a poor state of repair and refurbishment is not an option. The developer proposes to demolish and replace it with two separate buildings, each containing four high quality flats.

The development team has a long standing reputation for design quality and has appointed **Consultation Matters** to consult with local residents prior to submitting a planning application to the Council.

The design proposals aim to make a positive impact on the neighbourhood and wider local area. This will include a certain amount of repair work to the roadway for the first 100m from Downs Hill.

(Pictured overhead is the proposed site layout, together with an architect's drawing of the two proposed residential buildings (for illustrative purposes).

**Your Views Count**

We are contacting local residents early on in the process so we can address any concerns before a planning application is made.

If you have any questions or concerns, or would like to meet with the architect, Howard Fairbairn/MHK, who will explain the proposals in more detail, please do get in touch and we will organise a meeting on your behalf.

We hope this letter is useful in setting out the plans for 61 The Avenue. If you require further information please get in touch.

Sincerely

  
Rob East  
Consultation Matters  
rob@consultationmatters.org  
020 7307 3506

The scheme has been designed so it is in keeping with neighbouring properties and visual impact will be minimised by retaining the trees that currently border the site.




**Layout of the site has been designed to minimise the impact of the development on neighbouring properties.**

**Access to the flats has been carefully considered and three separate entrances are proposed to break up the parking area.**

**Parking spaces for each flat will be provided, plus four additional spaces for visitors.**

If you have any questions or would like us to arrange a meeting with the architect, please get in touch.

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Howard : Fairbairn : MHK