

# **W.H.A.T. Representation to Haringey Council Public Consultation: 'Sites Allocation Development Plan'**

RE: Site S2: Greater Ashfield Rd

Size (Ha) 3.06

PTAL Rating 1 to 2

Timeframe for delivery: 2015-2020 2020-2025 2025-2030

## **1. Comments on the Draft Site Allocation**

The allocation of the Greater Ashfield Road site calls into question the future of many homes and businesses currently located on the site. The Haringey Unitary Development Plan produced back in 2006 estimates that there are 67 dwelling units in Arena Business Centre alone as well as another 66 in the adjacent Omega Works.

The existing mixed (live-work) use of residences is vital to the livelihoods of the many residents who rely on the unique space and arrangement of the properties in order to sustain their small and micro businesses. These units allow residents to pursue professions that require the space and flexibility these residencies grant us.

We fully support efforts to improve and enhance the design of existing buildings and the enhancement of the site as a whole in a way that benefits existing residents and businesses on the site as well as the wider area and environment. However, as residents of this site we would strongly oppose a development process that would jeopardise the livelihoods and homes already sited here.

## **2. Existing Policy Designations (if known)**

Haringey's Local Plan: Strategic Policies (2013) identified specific challenges around the decline in manufacturing in the borough and the need to promote a successful and inclusive economy which benefits residents living and working in Haringey:

**“1.4.13 Haringey has a relatively large amount of industrial land. In the past, this land provided many jobs for manufacturing. But manufacturing has declined and we need to plan for new jobs to replace those being lost and to provide jobs for the increasing population. Travel to work patterns have become increasingly complex. It is accepted that many working residents in Haringey travel to work outside of the borough.**

**1.4.14 Promoting a successful and inclusive economy is particularly challenging given the current economic situation. The Council will**

**take into account these circumstances and take measures to support our residents and businesses during difficult economic times.”**

We consider the preservation and enhancement of existing businesses located on this site to be crucial to these objectives and we also firmly believe that redevelopment of the site to high-cost, high-density residential use would drive local businesses out of Haringey.

In contrast, preserving and enhancing the existing mixed-use nature of the site including the live/work designation of many of the residences, as well as the workshop space afforded by the design of many of the residential properties, would support truly local enterprises. This includes any self-employed residents who would otherwise be forced out of the borough because of the need to rent workspace in addition to their home.

Site Specific Proposal 17 (Unitary Development Plan 2006) recommends Arena Business Centre be considered for ‘Employed led mixed use development’. Similarly Site Specific Proposal 29 (Unitary Development Plan 2006) recommends that Omega Works should become “Mixed use employment and residential.”

It is our view that the existing use of the site does not conflict with the priorities of these Site Specific Proposals and that any development of the sites should formalise and enhance the diversity of uses that already exist within these areas. In addition, the Ecological Corridor and Site of Important Nature Conservation identified on the site contribute to the conclusion that wholesale demolition and redevelopment of the site should not take place.

Existing residents of the site have worked hard to enhance and conserve the biodiversity located in the ecological corridor through their own extensive community-spirited cultivation. It should go without saying that we would fully support proposals to enhance this natural space and improve access and use by residents both of the site and surrounding area.

### **3. What is the site and surrounding area like?**

Arena Design Centre began life as the recreational gardens for the new St. Ann's Hospital, which was established in 1892 by the Metropolitan Asylums Board following a breakout of scarlet fever. In the hospital's later psychiatric history, wards were erected, still evident in the structure of K-block for example. There was also a discrete tunnel to the main compound to avoid disturbing the locals. Arena was also notable in its repurposing during the World War II. The area was actually used to assemble spitfires.

Equally, Omega Works is a site with a rich history, which we believe is relevant and important to the local area. The site, which expanded significantly during the 1910s and 20s, actually began life as a factory that was in industrial use for a

large portion of the 20th century. Notably in 1935 the site was Challen piano factory, and it was here that the then world's largest piano was made, measuring at 11feet 8 inches and weighing over one and a quarter tons. This record was held until earlier this century. Footage actually exists within a Pathe newsreel of this piano being played.

Soon after, the factory changed output when it became the main site of production of HK furniture, one of London's uppermost manufacturers of high-end modernist interior chairs, sofas and chez lounges. Such was the importance of HK Furniture for the area (as an employer of status in Haringey) that the company's archives are now kept at Bruce Castle Museum Archives. HK Furniture closed their operations on the site in 2004.

Since this date, Omega Works has been subdivided by the handful of landlords who own the site. There have been a variety of uses taking place in the years since. The current uses include sash window manufacturers, a mechanics workshop, an arts/project space and a workshop that constructs film sets. Over time, a number of Omega's units have been utilised as live/work. Behind the factory is a yard that has been utilised by a number of units and has been home to the successful annual Omega Fete.

A slope of unclaimed wasteland runs behind one side of Omega Works and this extends all the way along the side of the Crusader Industrial Estate to the extent of the Barking-Gospel Oak Railway Line.

Notably, this area is a haven for wildlife, a result of the Omega Works residents removing a large quantity of Japanese knotweed. This has encouraged a diversity of plants and wildlife onto the site.

Residents of Omega have been in contact with the residents of the housing estate about opening up the site as a community garden for more people to get involved in the maintenance of the site. A fence was recently erected to stop fly tipping on this site of wasteland and many residents from Omega Works have been involved in removing rubbish from the site. There is also an unofficial footpath runs through this wasteland and through the Omega Works yard. This footpath is used by an increasing number of people now that the wasteland has fewer weeds and is beginning to look cultivated and significantly more inviting.

A plaque on the wall between this wasteland and the Crusader Industrial Estate reveals that the estate used to be owned by the Metropolitan Asylum Board. This again reveals a lot about the historical relevance of the site. Like many warehouses in this area, while Omega Works could be described as industrial and smoke-charred in many respects, it provides an important architectural connection to the industrial and manufacturing heritage of Haringey.

#### **4. Design Principles**

It has been stated in the January 2014 Site Allocation Consultation Document that “None of the existing buildings on the site need to be retained for heritage reasons, although the Hermitage road facades of Omega works has some appeal”. As previously stated, Omega Works was the home of the Challen piano factory, who in 1935 broke the record for the world’s largest piano, a significant object that now resides in a French chateaux. It should also be noted that Challen supplied the BBC with pianos. For this reason we firmly believe the area should be retained for heritage reasons.

It is stated in the Site Allocations Consultation Document that it is “vital that public routes into, through and across these sites, could be improved, including seeking ways to connect to Finsbury Park Avenue and Arena Retail Park to the west.” Further, it stated that “the future opening up of the existing blocked up tunnel linking Stanhope Gardens with the Retail Park should be considered. Within the site, a clear and legible street network is needed.”

While we would not object to these plans per se we would need further elaboration on how these plans would be implemented. For example, does this mean that public footpaths or even a road would be constructed?

It is also noted within the Site Allocations Consultation Document that “Development will have to improve access to public open space for recreation; this could include improving access to existing open space but it likely to require the creation of a new pocket park within the development”. As we have stated previously, residents of Omega Works have been in contact with the residents of the housing estate about opening up the area of wasteland behind Omega Works as a community garden, an area that has already experienced significant rejuvenation due to the efforts of Omega residents.

## **5. Implementation considerations**

### **5a. site contribute to 50% affordable housing target**

We live here as means of achieving affordable living and work spaces and currently residents pay the equivalent of affordable rates. If redevelopment into new-build residential properties were to occur, we believe it is highly likely that existing residents would no longer be able to afford to live on the site, nor would residents who live and work on the site be able to afford the on-going long term cost of renting additional space suitable for their businesses. Designating the site for mixed use, live/work purpose would contribute to 50% affordable housing target. Not only would this type of module allow tenants to maintain affordable rent, but it would also preserve what is a unique communal environment which allows for fruitful artistic collaborations and cross-pollination of ideas and enterprises, something which would not happen if everyone worked in separate studios.

5.c A future quiet way cycle route passes through this area.

Arena and Omega Works are home to countless cyclists and as such we believe this would be of great benefit, not just to us, but to the surrounding area.

**6. Comments on the potential development capacity**

Potential Development Capacity (Dependent upon findings of Employment Land Study) Residential 37,000m<sup>2</sup> Commercial Development 52,000m<sup>2</sup>

As stated above, we believe there is a strong case for the current mixed-usage of the site to be maintained. Arena and Omega currently provide a positive space that perfectly complements the needs of the community of residents as well as its commercial users.

The community that has steadily grown in the industrial area has strong links with the wider area, particularly in its contribution to the local economy. Further to this, the community of artists residing within the site has initiated outreach projects that have been of direct benefit to the local residents of the surrounding area. We would like to suggest that the great concentration of local creative expertise and the enriching potential of these communities should be viewed as a valuable and integral asset to the regeneration of the Haringey borough and be preserved as a key component of regeneration development.

At the present time, Arena Design Centre and the Omega Works are home to a wide variety of small local businesses and artists, all of whom are producing work within Haringey. Many of these artists and creative enterprises have been involved with and initiated a great number of community projects within the local Haringey communities and surrounding areas. As such, we form an integral and valuable part of the community and therefore feel we are an intrinsic factor within the future development of accessible arts and cultural provision within the borough.

Mixed usage would support the development of new purpose specific public arts as well as community centres for the areas surrounding these sites. This would provide a positive and accessible space for artists and residents to work together and develop and celebrate our diverse local communities and cultures. The warehouse communities, being creative hotbeds, once given enduring mixed-use status are perfectly placed to align with and execute this strategy.

This is the first time we have had the opportunity to engage in this way in a purpose built centre amongst residential creative spaces. This unique mix of residential work spaces, public community spaces and potentially regenerated green spaces is a good example of the way we in which we believe these areas should function, to provide much needed accessible and inclusive community

spaces, alongside creative development opportunities for local residents who would perhaps not otherwise access such facilities.

We have already made links with Manor House Development Trust, who are porting funded training into the creative community and keen to fund participative arts activities in the Woodberry Down regeneration program. Some of the candidates interested are themselves keen and well placed to open up work placement opportunities in their organisations. We have already started to promote the borough's creative talent linked to our community (visit [https://comuniart.com/home\\_pages/29](https://comuniart.com/home_pages/29) for details) and we are in the process of entering into talks with neighboring residents groups on further ways to outreach.

We are also connected to Haringey's cultural officer, who has seen both Haringey Arts and The Comuniart shows and will be invited to the launch of our next show in the middle of Woodberry Down estate.

Priorities for the London Borough of Haringey's Cultural Strategy identified to date are to:

- Strengthen the cultural economy and increase business start-ups, employment and training in the cultural sector
- Foster the creativity, enterprise and talent of young people in the borough, particularly in Tottenham
- Work in partnership to encourage a thriving cultural sector
- Maximise the regeneration, economic and social impacts of culture in Haringey, particularly for people and communities in the least privileged areas of the Borough
- Enhance Haringey's reputation and profile in London and beyond as a place with a strong cultural economy and a distinctive cultural identity and offer

There are significant concerns that proposals for the site's future development could damage this burgeoning community and the good things it is trying to do for the surrounding area. These concerns include the fact that the council's development and reclassification of the site will eventually fall into the hands of private developers, a shift that would effectively price people out of the area. This will inevitably displace a large number of local income residents, who require the spaces for affordable living and space within which to work.

The small businesses that have emerged out of the sites demonstrate that this environment can support the objectives of the council to support a growing economy. The consultation has raised a number of issues that we believe should be clarified before proposals are drafted. This will enable the existing community living there to have an informed response. We would like clarification on the projected numbers for residential development and whether these numbers take into account the existing numbers of residents living across these two areas.

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**Further notes:**

W.H.A.T. (Warehouses of Harringay Association of Tenants) is a residents group open to all residents of the warehouses located on sites S2 & S3. We have formed to maintain are unique community in the face of the wider changes taking place across the borough and wider London. We are diverse mix of residents from across the income spectrum and working in a range of employment, including a large population of people employed in a variety of creative industries. As well as a mix of residents, many of our members are small business owners. We use the sites to live, work or live and work.

**Contact:** Warehouses of Harringay Association of Tenants (W.H.A.T)

**Email:** [harringaywarehouse@gmail.com](mailto:harringaywarehouse@gmail.com)