


From: Steven Lazarus [REDACTED]
Sent: 15 January 2023 20:37
To: Town Planning
Subject: Molesey Venture – Application Ref 2022/3525 - Objection

 External email >

 First time sender >

Dear Planning Department

I tried to upload my objection via the web site but my message contained too many characters. I hope it is acceptable to email it in instead.

Kind regards

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Molesey Venture – Application Ref 2022/3525
Objection

Having looked at the plans and elevations and read through many of the supporting technical documents - it is clear that a mind boggling amount of very professional work has been done both by the developer's technical consultants and by the planning officers involved in the pre-application process. It seems that the earliest proposals were for the entirety of the site - including the green belt area. This was rejected. Subsequent proposals included a five storey central block. Also rejected. It seems planning officers made it clear to the developers that these schemes were not acceptable and that things would have to be scaled back. Over the course of five pre-application “cycles” officers have also made numerous design suggestions that aim to make the proposal cause less harm to local residents. (see design and access statements parts 1 to 4)

HOWEVER

Notwithstanding the above efforts by planning officers I still feel that the development as a whole is far too disruptive in terms of height, bulk and out-of-character design. It is just not sympathetic to its green belt, riverside surroundings. There are also numerous issues with ecology, flood risk, removal of trees etc. Not to mention the overlooking, loss of privacy and light issues for near neighbours. Traffic generation and parking are also major issues. The seriousness of the impact is illustrated by the large number of objections from neighbours with many legitimate concerns.

If a developer wants to build something as big as this in such a sensitive location then they should at least try to propose a win-win design. Why not present a truly beautiful design perhaps comprising only one and two storey buildings with abundant planting of semi mature trees. Parts of the old fabric of the riverside mill building and Rivercroft Cottage could be restored and integrated. Rather than try to discredit neighbours legitimate concerns with expert reports - why not work with the community to find a solution which everyone is happy with. Obviously the answer is that they want to maximise profits.

The design presented is, in my opinion, just a bland modern design which crams in as many units in as they can and completely fails to be special. The attempt to retain the character of the red brick riverside mill building fails miserably due to modern window designs. The landscaping seems inadequate considering the number of mature trees that will be chopped down. It will take another 30-50 years at least for any newly

planted trees to come anywhere near giving the appearance of a wooded green belt area. If the developer is going to spend c£29 million to build this thing – why can't it be special? Why can't they at least spend a bit more money on more mature trees? Again, the answer is to maximise profit.

According to the viability report the developer will apparently make an £8 million profit from selling the flats and houses for a total of £46 million. I realise that objecting on the basis of the developer maximising profit is not a legitimate planning matter - but if the result of that maximising profit is a development that is obnoxious in terms of harm to neighbours amenity, harm to the character and appearance of the area, harm to the local ecology and harm by increased traffic and reduced parking, that that surely is a legitimate planning matter.

To me, this development seems just plain wrong – both in terms of town planning and morally.

The Molesey Venture has been a haven for its own residents and for the people with special needs who live there. The Sons of the Devine Providence (SODP) are a religious and charitable organisation who I believe have done good works over many years. What has changed? They now seem to be greedily chasing the money by developing their property portfolio. They also did this at their other place at Hampton Wick – in partnership with the same developers. What used to be a haven for the old and disadvantaged has been turned into yet another luxury development. People who lived there were displaced and the care home demolished.

I can see no specialist reports or consultation requests (Surrey Adult Care, Surrey Adults Safeguarding Board, the Care Quality Commission etc.) that deal with the welfare of the vulnerable people who are being moved. There exists a protocol called the Joint Community and Care Home Provider Closure Protocol – has this protocol been complied with? There are vague “intentions” of first refusal on the new units in Block C – but who knows what the terms will be and whether there will be a binding obligation. See Viability report Para 6.22.

The developers have submitted many expert reports and statements to “prove” that there will be no detrimental effect on the amenity of neighbouring properties. I am very sceptical about these reports, commissioned at great expense by the developer and which clearly are not “independent” Two in particular lack credibility.

I am particularly sceptical about the transport statement. The appended Parking Beat Survey looked at existing parking capacity and concluded that there would be no displacement of parking caused by the new development as there were ample parking spaces nearby. Incredibly the survey included parking spaces in the actual Molesey venture (which won't be there if the development gets built) spaces in Broadfields and on Ember Lane (which residents of the new development would be very reluctant to use) and spaces in the CALA estate (which is private property). The survey failed to say anything about the severe congestion and problem parking that happens nearly every day at the bottom end of Orchard Lane – right next to the entrance of the Molesey Venture. There is also the danger of the blind bend – which will only become more dangerous if extra cars are parked.

There is also no specific mention or notation anywhere in the application that a section of publicly owned pavement will be removed just to the right of the new entrance. It will clearly be necessary to widen the entrance to accommodate refuse trucks and fire engines. It will also be necessary to construct pavement crossovers to accommodate parking in front of Block C. This will mean that six existing legal parking spaces will be lost in order to guarantee access.

The parking survey is so lacking in detail that it is not possible to know whether this reduction in existing parking was taken into account. Will this mean double yellow lines have to be installed? This would make it very difficult for my neighbours at Ember Farm Cottage to park, to legally unload their shopping, to receive deliveries or even to have maintenance carried out. Not just for the construction period but permanently. Also, there are disabled people who park up in order to access Cow Common and the River Ember. It is likely they will have to park much further away. The parking report fails to address these real issues.

I am also very sceptical about the Flood risk assessment. Particularly in relation to the underground car park. Para 3.10 states:

“Groundwater flooding tends to occur sporadically in both location and time. When groundwater flooding does occur, it tends to mostly affect low-lying areas, below surface infrastructure and buildings (for example, tunnels, basements and car parks) underlain by permeable rocks (aquifers). No below surface infrastructure and buildings are located or are proposed for the site. The risk of flooding from groundwater flooding is considered to be *not significant*.”

The author of this report seems to have made a massive glaring error involving possibly the most important part of the whole development in terms of flood risk. There is a large underground car park proposed. I don't think I need to elaborate – clearly this aspect needs to be re-considered.

Summary of specific objections:

Block A - way too big for this site when viewed from Greenbelt (and other angles). Looks like an institutional office block plonked down. Also creates serious overlooking and privacy issues for residents of Ember Farm Way

Block B - Old historic mill type building ruined by large modern window styles turning it into a bland generic block of flats like thousands of others – they boast about keeping the red brick to give some pretence of retaining the character – but that does not counter the damaging effect of the modern window designs. Additional top floor level very large terraces are totally out of scale and character with the riverside green belt surroundings. The terraces also overlook the garden of Imber Court Cottage and impact my family's privacy. Also likely to be noise as this is not just an occasional use terrace but the only garden space these townhouse have got. Due to the quiet rural nature of the location any noise will likely travel right across Cow Common and beyond - contrary to various policies.

Block C - Loss of Old historic Rivercroft cottage - not listed but part of the character of the area for c150 years or more. Serious overlooking from the side and rear. Bulky over-bearing form – especially affecting No 18 and others from Ember Farm Way.

Plight of current Molesey Venture residents - some with special needs - seems like they are being abandoned. Promises of first refusal in new block C don't appear to be binding and even if they were - probably don't compensate for the upset and disruption. Can't see any objection letters from the residents – perhaps they are fearful that to object would get them in trouble or treated less favourably. Perhaps they like what they have been offered. If they don't, who will advocate for them? I note that Surrey Adult Social Care, Surrey Adults Safeguarding Board, the Care Quality Commission have not been consulted. There is a protocol for the closure of care homes. I cannot see anything in the application that deals with this

Parking and traffic - their report lacks credibility and detail. They claim no parking will be displaced. This claim simply cannot be correct and needs further investigation so that objectors, officers and committee members can come to a properly informed conclusion. The report also says there will be no significant increase in traffic. That's what the CALA report said a few years back and it is clear now that they underestimated. The Report fails to take into account that statistically 44% of the new units are likely have two cars or more. Source: Department for Transport statistics - National Travel Survey - Table NTS0703 - Household car availability by household income quintile: England, from 2002 + common sense. This omission will clearly affect the calculations for traffic generation and parking stress.

Emergency vehicle access - larger vehicles often unable to navigate bottom end of Orchard Lane because of already congested parking. The developers swept path analysis ignores existing legal parking. The proposal plans also show removal of public domain pavement outside of the developers ownership. This isn't mentioned anywhere in the application. They will probably need to apply for double yellow lines – which will further reduce available parking for existing users.

Their Flood risk assessment states that there are no underground structures. This is clearly an error as the proposal clearly has a very large underground car park.

I do not object to the principle of improving the Molesey venture but I do object to this application which I believe should be REFUSED in its current form. Hopefully this would persuade the developers to come back with a much better scheme

I'm sure it would be possible to refine the designs further (or start from scratch) and create something really beautiful with outstanding architecture and landscaping that doesn't impact upon neighbours. Any new scheme should also include legally binding commitments to help the existing residents transition in a compassionate way.

Please consider the above points and the many points raised by others regarding wildlife, loss of trees, flood risk, overloaded sewers etc. etc.

Yours sincerely

Steve Lazarus

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