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To: Town Planning
Subject: OBJECTION - 2022/3525 - The Molesey Venture, Orchard Lane, East Molesey, KT8 0BN

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Dear Planning Department

Apologies for email rather than upload. Too many characters.

Please find set out below my objections to the Molesey Venture proposal

Kind regards

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Objection- Molesey Venture – Application Ref 2022/3525

Having read the Design and Access addendum (D&A) it seems to me that the developer's have made some token compromises but doubled down on their previous denials of harm – backed up by expensive consultant's reports. In my opinion, the small changes are nowhere near sufficient to overcome my objection.

I agree with my neighbours that this proposal is inappropriate due to overdevelopment (too many units), height, bulk, overlooking, loss of privacy, loss of trees, harm to wildlife, flood risk, sewage capacity, road capacity, parking, out of character, etc.etc.

There are just so many things that are inappropriate about this proposal it is hard to imagine that the Council could come anywhere close to granting permission.

I do want to mention some specific points in more detail.

Height, scale, massing and density.

The D&A at 2.1 states “The footprint, scale, height and massing has been tested from key views” and “are in line with policy”. If they are in line with policy, this is on a technical basis only, surely they are not in line with the “spirit” of the policy. A building of this size, which will unarguably dominate the west facing skyline of Ember Farm Way residents, clearly conflicts with the spirit of the policy.

Green Belt Policy

The vast mass of the building, which to me is reminiscent of an office block, will be clearly visible from Cow Common, which is a lovely rural riverside haven. Most importantly, Cow Common is in the Green Belt. The proposal site is not within the GB but the emerging Development Management Plan – Proposed submission - DM17 (d) states that “New development of land adjoining or clearly visible from the Green Belt should respond to its setting and the character of the area, ensuring that buildings and landscape schemes are designed to create an appropriate transition between urban and open land.” In my opinion the sheer size and height of the proposal makes it impossible to comply with this policy.

In addition, I believe various appeal and court precedents require that special consideration is given to proposals which are immediately adjacent to the GB and have a negative impact on the purposes of the GB – namely – openness. There is no doubt in my mind that the even though the development is not inside the GB, it will have a seriously detrimental effect on adjoining GB openness.

At risk of being shot down, would it not actually be better to allow the developer to encroach onto the GB area to the north (which they own) perhaps with beautifully designed single storey wooden clad houses and several hundred more trees and meandering pathways – a bit like a Centre Parks resort. Rather than being sold to wealthy downsizers with two cars, they could be rented to young families who were willing to legally commit to a no car life. Sounds a bit idealistic – but maybe that would resonate with the original aims of the Sons of the Devine Providence. And they wouldn't have to move the water main.

Character and design.

The D&A states “The design and materials of the buildings has been informed by a thorough analysis of the existing street scape and the buildings and materials on site at present” The response seems to focus only on the colour of the brick and render – to me, this is not the issue.

My issue is with the overall design which is BLAND. A common boring generic look. In my opinion it would be far better to GO REALLY MODERN or GO AUTHENTICALLY HISTORIC.

The developers seem to think that keeping the red brick façade of Block B (the historic mill type building alongside the river) preserves the historic character which is viewable from the foot bridge and the riverside. Unfortunately, the window design and the addition of balconies has the effect of turning this historic building into just another bland generic façade. It totally fails to retain the charming historic look.

Clearly the architects for the current proposal are highly skilled. They must want to create something fantastic and groundbreaking. I wonder if they remember their time at Architects school. I am sure that if they were given the right brief, they would be capable and enthusiastic about producing a far more interesting scheme. This is actually a fantastic site to build something truly remarkable. Something that might win a RIBA award.

Transport and Parking.

The D&A states “Data from the Mulberry Court development by Lifestyle Residences shows a significantly lower demand for parking spaces than 1 to 1, with less than 50% of apartments having a car” If that is indeed true I would suggest it is only possible because Mulberry Ct is a 1 minute walk from Hampton Wick station and a 9 minute walk to Waitrose and John Lewis (per Google maps) This is a significantly different transport profile to the current proposal and therefore not a useful comparison. I cannot believe that wealthy purchasers of these luxury apartments will not have at least one car each. As stated in my previous objection: “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

I believe that the transport report and conclusions understate the car ownership and parking requirements, consequently I believe there will be parking overspill onto Orchard Lane that will cause problems for existing residents and users of Cow Common.

The loss of kerbs and pavement immediately around the entrance to the site will mean that several parking spaces will be lost. The residents of Ember Farm Cottage will likely end up having to park halfway up Orchard Lane. This may not sound serious but just getting shopping into the house will be problematic.

Relocation & phasing for existing residents.

At D&A 2.7 the developer's response to concerns for the existing residents of the Molesey Venture, some with special needs, reads as a series of platitudes, with no detail about how exactly these people will be looked after. This may not be a relevant technical planning matter but to me how they are treated and whether they are guaranteed a place in the new charity building matters and should be a planning consideration.

Conclusion

The amendments are nowhere near sufficient for me to alter my view that this development is entirely inappropriate, and that permission should be refused.

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