

Concerning Public Consultation:

Your website states that the public consultation start date was 21/08/09.

My partner and I live directly adjacent to the site and were only notified in writing of the development's submission to planning on 07/09/09 - more than two weeks later.

Who exactly was informed on your start date of August 21 and by what means?

The plans were only recently made available on your website.

There are no planning notices tied to the lampposts or trees that skirt the site notifying the public of this proposed high density, high rise, housing development, because, we are told, these signs are not allowed in 'a conservation zone' - I don't think I need to point out the potential irony.

The letter we received from GVA Grimley on 07/09/09 notifying us of the development, states that consultation was undertaken with local residents at a public exhibition.

This exhibition was presented to us in the form of a few boards depicting 'emerging proposals' - mood boards, sketches and possible plans.

There were no detailed drawings presented at all, for example, there was a big gaping hole in the elevation where the tower blocks to the north of the site lie.

There was also no indication of building materials.

The Public Consultation End Date as specified on your website is 11/09/2009 - just four days after we received notification.

I have since learned that this date has been amended till the 25/09/09, but your website still has not been updated.

This gives myself and others a period of only 18 days to lodge objections.

If this were an application for a loft conversion this allowance may be adequate but utterly inadequate when it concerns a development of this magnitude and impact.

Our Objections:

Whilst my partner and I welcome development of the site and are pro 'good' modern architecture, we have a number of deep concerns with this application.

Our concerns focus mainly on the high density of the development and the inherent problems associated therein and also the impact the development will have on the character and atmosphere of the area.

Trees

Most of the trees on the site and skirting the site are to be removed.

This will radically affect the atmosphere and character of the area as there is currently a very attractive balance of building to trees in the area.

Though the current college site is arguably ugly the vast trees that surround it screen it from view and removal of these mature trees that also serve as a home to local wildlife will greatly upset the intended aesthetic and ecological harmony of the area.

I understand that there are many trees on site that are self seeded and young and I have no real issue with the developers felling these, but when asked why they were not retaining some of the mature trees, I was told they didn't want to create the effect of a 'gap toothed smile' and that they intend to remove all existing landscaping and plant a regular line of trees.

It is precisely the great age and uniqueness of these mature trees that creates the distinct atmosphere of this conservation area, which is exactly why it has attributed such status.

I'm sure the honest reason for this drastic felling is simply that these trees get in the way of their build.

Density

The development is high density. 74 units per hectare is, we believe, utterly inappropriate for the area, far less for a conservation zone. This precious area should not be treated as a brown field site.

The present college, though high density, accommodating many students as it does, is empty most evenings, weekends and holidays and as such makes for a good neighbour.

This residential complex will, by nature, be permanently occupied to some degree 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, and this will lead to a significant increase in noise and light pollution, littering, traffic etc.

The developments' many residents will increase the amount of traffic in the area. These plans offer no amendments to the surrounding already weak road infrastructure. We regularly witness near misses on the blind bends, narrow winding roads and corner junctions. An increase in traffic flow will invariably increase the possibility of accidents.

The development does not have a sufficient allocation of parking spaces – there are all ready parking problems all round the site. Their parking allocation will only work if each household owns only one car and the residents have 20 or so friends between them!

With many people and many windows, the area at night will be transformed from a peaceful dark space to a brightly lit housing complex.

There are not sufficient local facilities to cope with the numbers of people this development will house. There are few local shops, bars and restaurants. The nearest supermarket is only reachable by car and yet they say they will discourage car use!

The proportion of one bed roomed flats is far too high, It is precisely what St Leonards doesn't need more of. This development should be trying to attract couples and families – people that are going to stay in the area and call it home.

The proportion of social housing has been upped since our only consultation, when we were told there would only be 13% social housing.

Whilst we have no objections to the current level of social housing we would like assurances that the bulk of one bed roomed flats on the complex will not eventually be sold to housing associations thus upsetting the set balance. This balance is vital to the regeneration of the area.

Architecture

We have not had enough time to study the plans in sufficient depth to list a detailed set of objections in relation to the proposed architecture. We will however submit our thoughts before the end date of public consultation. I feel though it is important to lodge our initial observations.

Generally the architecture does not seem to be of a quality befitting many of the surrounding buildings and area. The development as a whole does not take advantage of the exciting potential the site offers.

It is an opportunity to rid the site of its scattering of unattractive buildings and offer some sort of architectural unity. It is also a rare opportunity for large scale regeneration that could considerably enhance this stunning but somewhat disheveled area.

The buildings are too high - in particular Blocks A, B, D and E

Blocks A + B

The drawings of these blocks are marked 'Work in progress, Preliminary Issue, for discussion purposes only.'

What does this mean? Who is this discussion open to? At what stage, if not the planning stage, when will these plans be finalized?

The developers are cramming the maximum accommodation that they think they'll get away with into these blocks.

Apparently they will not extend beyond the tree line (what trees are left) but I find it impossible to believe we will not see them. In our view, they will be a blight on the area.

The views from Block A will be pretty dark and awful, backing onto the quarry wall as they will. I can't imagine (apart from the penthouse) these apartments being desirable to anyone.

Block C

There are hardly any drawings for this block? I am concerned about privacy and noise issues potentially caused by the houses and gardens overlooking No 11 The Mount.

Blocks D and E

Will block the view of Burtons magnificent crescent (Block K) for many properties at the rear of The Mount. This block should not be more imposing than the Burton Crescent.

Demolition/Construction timetable.

For those close to the site the impact in terms of noise is going to be enormous, This combined with a very long demolition / construction plan of at the very least four and a half years is going to heighten that impact significantly. I appeal to the Council and Planning committee to view this timetable as unreasonable. Fast construction would make this process far more bearable.

In Conclusion

We hope very much that the planning department and the council take a long term view and sell the land to responsible developers who will produce a design of quality that truly incorporates the setting and history of the site and not to a developer who views the site as 'cheap land' and seeks maximum profits.

Particularly in light of Gladedales recent £1 billion debt for equity swap with Lloyds banking group, their hunger for big profits will be considerable.

We are aware the council need money for the College's relocation program but our hope is that this will not be sought at the expense of The Archery Road site.

Yours Sincerely

Lucy Scott and Tom Ellis