

Waterloo (East) Residents Associations (WESRA)
Windmill House Estate RA (WHERA)
7 Windmill House
Windmill House Estate
Windmill Walk
Waterloo
London SE1 8LX

Planning
LB Lambeth
PO Box 734
Winchester SO23 5DG

1st May 2021

1. PLANNING OBJECTION RE 30 WOOTTON STREET, LONDON SE1 8AZ
YOUR REF: 21/00191 (FUL)
INVOLVING BUILDING OF BLOCK OF FLATS RISING TO 10 STOREYS

(1) IN BREACH OF POLICY Q6 OF THE LAMBETH LOCAL PLAN (2015)
saying this area in general is unsuitable for such high buildings

(2) AND PROPOSED TO BE BUILT ON

(i) Windmill House Estate Low Level Amenity Space (WHELLAS) (designed by Lambeth Council's predecessors to benefit the three surrounding social housing blocks, namely: Ipsden Buildings (Peabody), Windmill House (Lambeth) and Tait House (Grainger; former Church Commissioners):

(ii) Windmill House Estate Nursery & Playground (Asset of Community Value)*;

(iii) Greet Street Green Open Space (Asset of Community Value)*; and

(iv) Windmill House Estate's Small 8 Space Carpark (in a block of 34 flats), treated as having no association with Windmill House despite its provision for its residents currently.

* The limitations of ACV status here are understood. However, such status can be reasonably pleaded, as here, in support of claims that the current use / potential of the same is of real objective value to the community and appreciated as such by the local community which went to the trouble of obtaining that status.

2. THE OBJECTORS HEREIN ETC

(1) I am Julian Smith and I have lived in Windmill House at the above address, part of the Windmill House Estate (within which this redevelopment is proposed) for more than 20 years; and for my sins I am:

(i) the Secretary of the Waterloo (East) Residents' Associations (WESRA) (the successful sponsor of the above ACVs); and

(iii) Chairman of Windmill House Estate Residents' Association (WHERA).

(2) I make this objection on my own behalf.

(3) I also make it on behalf of WESRA and WHERA, having agreed to their formal decisions and requests that I do so.

(4) With the hard copy of this sent to Lambeth Planning I / we enclose individual planning objections received by WESRA and WHERA from the following, expressly adopting my / WESRA's [/ WHERA's] objections herein:

Residents of Ipsden Buildings (70 Flats)

49

Residents of Windmill House (34 Flats)

33

Residents of Tait House (30 Flats)

29

Other Local Persons or Friends of the Area

27

Total

161

This represents a very large number of objections from within this area of no more than 134 flats in our three WESRA blocks, and there is a surprisingly large number from those further afield. I have never seen anything like it in my long and active experience in the area.

(5) And I / we hereby adopt any more technical and other objections made by other objectors in so far as they are complimentary hereto.

(6) it is with a heavy heart I / we oppose this Application:

(i) we are not NIMBYS (not in my backyard types) in a leafy suburb;

(ii) we are conscious of the social housing element; indeed we are overwhelmingly in social housing ourselves;

(7) BUT it cannot be right, surely, to provide luxury flats for the rich and even fellow social housing tenants at the very real expense of the many more us who live here in much more modest, if pleasant, accommodation which so heavily relies on WHELLAS and which was provided by Lambeth Council's predecessors to meet a recognised real need of this area's flats which clearly continues?

(8) Furthermore, the housing / social housing shortage at that time (late 50's / early 60's) was at least as great as now.

3. PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION

(1) The Applicant's pre-planning community consultation agency claims to have met with all relevant community organisations and to have consulted in a manner as 'robust' as usual. In any event:

(i) WESRA has had no such meeting with the Applicant;

(ii) WHERA has had no such meeting either;

(iii) WESRA is not even mentioned as such a group by the Applicant;

(iv) neither is WHERA;

(v) nor are the owners of the WESRA blocks, namely:

(a) Peabody (1-70, Ipsden Buildings);

(b) Lambeth Housing (1-34, Windmill House);

(c) Grainger (1-30, Tait House);

(2) Representatives of all three blocks (Connie Finch, Ipsden Buildings; yours truly and Andrew Leonard, Windmill House; and Mark Thistlethwaite and Ray Keavey, Tait House) all attempted to join an online discussion, only to find on doing so that questions needed to have been logged some time prior to that (which had not been announced previously); the offer to take our questions by telephone while we listened to the answers to other questions simultaneously was difficult; the person at the other end of the line was unable to take an accurate note of our questions; all four of us gave up without one of our questions being addressed; and we were not contacted thereafter.

(3) the Application as it is now is exactly or materially the same as proposed during that exercise (so little or no engagement / listening there);

(4) the Application as is now is exactly or materially the same as then notwithstanding the Applicant having consulted Lambeth Planning prior to the Application (so little or no engagement / listening there);

(5) I am grateful to Lambeth Planning for having flagged in its notice of this Application that this is a Departure Application from Policy Q26 of the Lambeth Local Plan (2015), which says that such a tall building would be inappropriate for this area; I submit it is and then some.

(6) I understand that such Applications should be notified not just by post to local residents, but by notices attached to lampposts in the affected area, and I would be grateful if Lambeth Planning would re-start the notice period to allow for that and any documents which are added to the application after the notice dated 16th April 2021, informing all residents of the re-scheduled response date subsequently.

4. REQUEST FOR SITE VISIT/S

(1) I would also be grateful if, given the inherently controversial nature of the Application and what is said herein, Lambeth Planning and the Planning Committee would visit the site ASAP. The Applicant's own pictures of what is proposed are pretty damning in support terms, but they are also a good take of the same too in other respects and the inappropriateness and, I am bound to say, audacity of what is proposed can only be fully appreciated from site.

(2) Both bodies should also note that:

(i) the proposed redevelopment lies within what Lambeth Council, in its granting of Asset of Community Value status to the 'Windmill House Estate Nursery & Playground' and 'Greet Street Green Open Space' in November 2020, referred to as 'The Windmill House Estate Low Level Amenity Space' (WHELLAS) (designed to benefit all the three closely located WESRA blocks amenity wise), which accurately describes what it is that WHELLAS does for the said blocks and area;

(ii) the Windmill House Estate Nursery & Playground is not 'redundant' as stated by the Applicant, but a purpose built, refurbished, state of the art nursery that has simply been taken off the market or effectively so by the Applicant and mothballed for redevelopment over recent years notwithstanding the great need for such provision in the area as recognised by its Asset of Community Value status not least;

(iii) the Application makes no plans to ensure such provision upon the completion of construction and, needless to say, during construction;

(iv) the also valuable and popular 'Greet Street Green Open Space' (the only such in the WESRA area) is not referred to in the Application and is simply treated as part of the Windmill House Estate Nursery & Playground also be built upon, despite clearly being separate therefrom, the Nursery & Playground being a private secure space and the Open Green Space being open to the public and indeed having a Lambeth Council dog poo bin; such that its loss to Windmill House Estate (to which it properly belongs), WHELLAS, WESRA's blocks and the wider community, which would be great, is simply not addressed, let alone justified, in what is a proposal by the Applicant to grab a scarce community green designated as an Asset of Community Value by Lambeth;

(v) and Windmill House Estate's Small 8 Space Carpark (in a block of 34 flats) on which the Application also proposes building, is treated as having no association with Windmill House or value to its residents, despite its valued use by its residents currently.

5. FURTHER MATTERS

1. A number of planning precedents are quoted by way of justification for the Application notwithstanding Policy Q26 of the Lambeth Local Plan (2015). However:

(1) the additional substantive issues herein are not considered; and

(2) no reference is made to the recent Planning Inspectorate's Appeal Decision of 7th January 2021 in Re Woodlands Nursing Home, 1 Dugard Way, Lambeth (APP/N5660/W/20/3248960), in which Lambeth Council's principled refusal to grant that Application was upheld; which is a much more recent and pertinent precedent, underlining just how inappropriate this even more aggressive Application is in the context of this smaller and indeed cramped urban space so reliant on WHELLAS.

2. Building / Estate Designs of Existing Area

(1) Ipsden Buildings

This Edwardian block is not listed in any way, but it is well maintained and is frequently referred to as attractive by residents and visitors.

(2) Tait House

Tait House is part of the Tait & Benson Estate, is well maintained and an inter-war years Art Deco beauty, recognised not least by the 20th Century Society.

(3) Windmill House Estate

(i) Windmill House is an attractive, well maintained, classic mid-century LCC designed 8 storey block of flats which crowns, in its design including WHELLAS, the area affected by this Application; and which Edinburgh University notes as a particularly fine example of such a tower block:

<https://www.towerblock.eca.ed.ac.uk/development/ethelm-street>

(ii) Windmill House and its communal front garden are situated to the West of the Windmill House Estate, facing but well away from the block opposite that side across Windmill Walk, with Windmill House's somewhat narrow sides facing, unobtrusively, the railway arches across Wootton Street on the North side, and Ipsden Buildings on the South side.

(iii) The rear of Windmill House is a similar distance away from the block it faces on the East side over WHELLAS, namely Ipsden Buildings across Greet Steet;

(iv) WHELLAS in its low level provides Ipsden Buildings (running the length of the Windmill House Estate border to the North), Tait House (which runs the length of the Windmill House Estate border opposite to the East), and Windmill House, with:

- (a) space;
- (b) air;
- (c) light;
- (d) sunshine;
- (d) privacy;
- (e) remarkable quietness;
- (f) etc.

(iv) It is noteworthy here that:

(a) all the flats in the WESRA blocks are small and most of us live pretty cheek to jowel with our partners, families and housemates, which places an extra value on our available outdoor space;

(b) Ipsden Buildings has a courtyard which runs the length of the Windmill House Estate, with benches and open stairwells which are much used in the Summer by residents taking a break, not least from the oppressive views from their living rooms largely facing South and the ugly rear of the Young Vic across the narrow Cons Street;.

(c) the Greet Street Green Open Space is popular with all the three WESRA blocks, but especially with residents of Ipsden Buildings (which receives little sunshine) as well as with workers taking their lunch, all of whom use the extensive low wall as a bench;

(d) Tait House has poor sunshine and light issues too, affecting the rear of the premises which makes the communal garden there unusable and places added value on the sunshine and light

received by their rooms, balconies and gardens at the front, which are made much of by residents sunbathing etc;

(e) Windmill House has a number of courtyards to the rear, all of which benefit from WHELLAS too; and

(f) in addition to all this and as previously stated, WHELLAS also provides a much needed Nursery & Playground which has ACV status, and a valuable small car park for the residents of Windmill House.

6. THE PROPOSAL IF GRANTED WOULD:

(1) place a too close proximity (involving the chopping down of two precious trees on the Windmill House Estate), towering, dense, overbearing, overlooking (there are individual balconies and two large viewing platforms no less, the impact of which is only to a small extent reduced by being at an angle to the surrounding blocks - people can look in any direction from such outdoor spaces), massive building in the context of the area, slap bang in the middle of the Windmill House Estate, destroying all it valuably provides at present to the surrounding WESRA blocks;

(2) stick out like a sore thumb on that account, the current buildings being comparatively narrow and linear (Ipsden Buildings and Windmill House) and curvilinear (Tait House);

(3) look as if a tower block from Shanghai or Dubai had been dumped in the backstreets of Waterloo, on account of its design and materials being so out of keeping with the existing buildings and character of the area;

(4) act to join-up the currently well spaced buildings in such a way as to replace a not unpleasant variety of styles which do not intrude upon each other, with an unpleasant mismatch dominated by an altogether alien and inappropriate building;

(5) increase the housing and population density of the Windmill House Estate by $36 / 34 \times 100 = 105.88$ per cent, creating a comparatively noisy spot where the oasis of WHELLAS currently is

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7. FURTHERMORE

(1) The light report either does not address or downplays the relevance of light loss to balconies, courtyards, gardens and the Greet Street Green Open Space.

(2) There is an extremely dated and somewhat bourgeois underemphasis therein on the loss of sunshine and light to bedrooms, kitchens, hallways and other traditionally deemed

non-habitable rooms that does not address the modern reality on the ground in our area. For example:

(i) my kitchen is continuous with my living room and my kitchen window brings sunlight as far into the room as the living room window at the front of a morning, thanks to WHELLAS;

(ii) my entrance way and the corridor to my bedrooms, toilet and bathroom is continuous with my sitting room also, and I leave the bedroom doors open to receive the sunlight from the rear bedroom into my living space and front bedroom as far as the front bedroom window of a morning, thanks to WHELLAS;

(iii) I spend more time in my rear bedroom than I do the living room, which is where I have my study;

(iv) and so do a large number of youngsters and sharers.

8. CONCLUSION

For all these reasons, I / we respectfully ask Lambeth Planning and Lambeth's Planning Committee to recommend dismissing and to dismiss respectively, this outrageous environmental, heritage and urban community destroying proposal.

Statement of Truth

I declare the contents of this statement to be true.

Julian Smith
JULIAN SMITH

Secretary
WESRA

Chairman
WHERA