

St. Lawrence's Church: Community Consultation Newsletter
Comments to Ballymore from Brentford Voice

The Brentford Project Plot A

Community Consultation Newsletter – Comments from Brentford Voice

Thank you for the opportunity extended to some of the community in Brentford to comment on your latest proposals for Plot A of the Brentford Project. This response represents solely the views of the Board of Brentford Voice and these views may differ in some respects from those expressed by the wider community. We hope that you receive a good overall response to your consultation despite the limitations imposed by these strange times.

We understand that two planning applications will be submitted later this month. The “red lines” on the final page of the consultation show the boundaries of the applications. Would we be correct to assume that there will also be a third application for listed building consent? We look forward to seeing all of the detailed proposals.

We found the consultation to be ambiguous in the description of those in the wider community who will enjoy the use of each of the components of the scheme. Our comments are based on the following assumptions:

- The general public will enjoy free access to the proposed community gardens and to the interior of St. Lawrence's Church.
- Residents living within Ballymore's larger site to the south of the High Street will have exclusive access to the proposed gym, swimming pool, and of course the facilities within the block of 18 flats.

If these assumptions are correct, we very much welcome the generality of the proposals for the use of the Church and the gardens. This site is one of the hidden jewels in Brentford's heritage crown and after almost 60 years of disuse these proposals represent a very important milestone, both for Brentford's future and for the stewardship of its heritage.

We believe that it is vital that a Management Scheme be developed for the Church and gardens and that this should be developed in consultation with the community. Brentford Voice would welcome the opportunity to be involved in the development of such a scheme.

We have a number of more detailed comments, requests for further information, and questions. These are attached as an **Annex** to this letter.

We would be grateful if you would respond to our questions and comments as soon as possible and ideally in advance of the submission of the relevant planning applications. We would also like to learn of your intentions with regard to the analysis and publication of the results of the community consultation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like any further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Case (Chair)
on behalf of the Board of Brentford Voice

Detailed comments and questions regarding the proposals

1 St. Lawrence's Church (the building)

- 1.1 The community has many ideas on possible uses for the church and would welcome the opportunity to discuss these ideas with Ballymore. We appreciate that a viable set of proposals would have to be supported by a revenue stream.
- 1.2 We are sure that such matters will form a significant part of the conditions attached to a listed building consent but we are anxious to ensure that the restoration of the interior and exterior of the Church is carried out to the highest standards, with the utmost sensitivity, and retaining original features. A schedule of work and materials will also form part of the listed building consent as will details of the proposals for fenestration and glazing.
- 1.3 A recent development in Brentford involved work on a listed building and resulted in immutable damage. We wish to avoid a repeat of this situation and we therefore hope, and expect, that works will be closely monitored by Historic England and by the London Borough of Hounslow's Conservation Team. We are encouraged by the intention that work will be carried out "under the guidance of a specialist team".
- 1.4 Many of the fine monuments and memorials that originally graced the interior of the Church are no longer there having been sold, given on loan, or otherwise disposed of. We would like to ensure that all avenues are explored to reinstate, where possible, some of those monuments. We understand that the interior of the Church still contains some monuments, albeit damaged, and we would wish to see their restoration where possible.
- 1.5 We look forward to receiving information on how the inhumations within the church will be treated.
- 1.6 An earlier proposal for the Church Tower was to create a lightweight internal staircase with a viewing platform at the top, allowing it to sit lightly within the original structure and not damaging the historic fabric of the building. We would welcome this feature. Does this form part of your current proposals?
- 1.7 The Church Tower previously housed a turret clock, a bell frame, and six bells. All of these items were removed between about 1952 and 1980. We would like to explore the possibility of installing a silent replica clock, using a modern mechanism, possibly on the east face of the tower. We would also like to explore the possibility of installing a digital audio system which could broadcast a recorded peal of bells on special occasions.

2 The Gardens

- 2.1 The Grand Junction Water Company fountain is listed Grade II and it was installed in about 1862. It is located within the curtilage of the Church and adjacent to Brentford High Street. Your current proposals make no mention of how this important fountain will be treated and we would welcome further information. The restoration of the fountain, with running water, would provide a very attractive feature.
- 2.2 The consultation does not appear to provide any indication of the location of the points of public ingress and egress to and from the gardens. We would welcome further information on this issue.

- 2.3 It is probable that the clearance of vegetation from the churchyard and from the cemetery will reveal a significant number of headstones and other burial monuments. We would welcome information on your intentions with regard to these important memorials to former residents of Brentford. Perhaps they could be incorporated as features within the gardens?
- 2.4 A family tomb of particular significance to Brentford is that of the Ronalds family and we believe that this may remain in the churchyard. The Ronalds were a notable Brentford family of horticulturalists and one of their nurseries was adjacent to this site. A book entitled *Pyrus Malus Brentfordiensis: or, a Concise Description of Selected Apples* by Hugh Ronalds was published in 1831. This has been described as “possibly the most beautifully illustrated of all English fruit books”. We believe that a selection of Hugh’s apple trees would be an appropriate part of the planting in the gardens. We would be pleased to provide more information if required.
- 2.5 The desk-based archaeological assessment that accompanied an earlier planning application (P/2018/0043) noted the potential for remains of medieval buildings in the immediate vicinity of the Church and on the site of the proposed gym. We look forward in due course to reading the Written Scheme of Investigation.
- 2.6 The high ecological value of the churchyard was noted within previous planning applications. We look forward to learning of your proposals for the retention and enhancement of the ecological value of the site. For example will bat roosts be provided for brown long-eared bats in both the gardens and in the roof of the Church?
- 2.7 We welcome the intention to retain the “significant existing mature trees and positively integrate them into the design proposals”.
- 2.8 The burial grounds have a particular significance for the descendants of those who worked on the canal boats. Many of these were buried within the site. A commemoration to the community of former canal families, such as a statue or other memorial, would be very appropriate within the gardens.
- 2.9 During the English Civil War about 70 men, both Parliamentarians and Royalists, died at the Battle of Brentford on 12 November 1642. The graveyard is the resting place of at least some of the dead. The parish register of St. Lawrence’s lists six officers who died but it also mentions “divers others”, meaning many others who are not named or possibly not identified. We would welcome an appropriate commemoration of this significant historical event.

3 The Gym and Swimming Pool

- 3.1 We think that a contemporary design is the right approach for the building adjoining the church. However we look forward to seeing detailed plans of the elevations in context.
- 3.2 We assume that access to the facility be step free.
- 3.3 Previous proposals put forward a scheme whereby the Church and the adjacent new building were physically joined. We welcome the separation of the two buildings in the current proposals. However the passageway between the gym and the Church appears to be very narrow and we wonder if this could be widened to facilitate pedestrian access to the gardens.
- 3.4 The consultation suggests that the private pool will be in open view from the public gardens. We imagine that a visual barrier of some kind will be required and a lightweight and partly transparent roof may provide an effective and reasonably inexpensive solution.

- 3.5 We are sure that you have given this matter a great deal of thought but we wonder if this, or any other location within Plot A, is a suitable site for a swimming pool. It is likely to be overshadowed by the block of flats while it will be expensive to maintain through the clearing of leaves and debris. It reduces the amount of open space available to the gardens while the pool will be presumably heated in which case it will consume a good deal of energy. It will also be subject to noise and air pollution from the main vehicle access to the larger site.
- 3.6 We are unclear on the reasons why the swimming pool “enables us to protect the historic trees present in the church yard and to enhance the open space”.

4 The Block of Flats

- 4.1 If this was a completely fresh proposal we would raise substantial objection to the principle of residential development within this site although we may have been prepared to accept a lower-rise scheme perhaps composed of townhouses. We accept that the current proposal forms part of the existing permission for the hybrid scheme but we would very much welcome an alternative approach.
- 4.2 We understand that the reserved matters application will be for approval of matters relating to the layout, access, scale and appearance of the development. You may consider that the scale of the development is fixed by the existing permission but we look forward to seeing details of the elevations and finishings. In particular we would hope to see a treatment that pays due regard to the visual relationship to St. Lawrence’s Church.
- 4.3 We would wish to see the installation of a green roof and/or green walls.
- 4.4 An additional issue, not mentioned in the consultation document, is that we believe that the block of flats will be built partly on the cemetery extension to the churchyard which was opened in 1884. We think that the remains of at least 150 people may be disturbed. Knowledge of this may have some impact on the views of some in the community but, again, we expect that the planning application will provide further details.
- 4.5 We are confident that all statutory procedures will be followed in relation to the disturbance of human remains and the treatment of headstones. However we are sure that you are aware that work already carried out just beyond the south east corner of the site has caused considerable adverse comment from the local community. Headstones have been thrown into a random and clearly visible pile without any apparent regard for the dignity and respect that should be afforded to the dead of Brentford.
- 4.6 We would welcome further information on your plans for this matter and for the treatment of human remains, including arrangements for contacting living relatives of the dead.
- 4.7 The law, and guidance from Historic England (*Advice Note 10*), clearly states that buildings and other structures that pre-date July 1948 are deemed to form part of the listing irrespective of the text of the listing description. This would suggest that the churchyard, the cemetery extension, and the old Vicarage may all form part of the listing. We are confident that you will have discussed this issue with Historic England and with the Conservation Team at LB Hounslow. We would welcome an indication of the outcome of those discussions.

Notes:

- 1 At some point Brentford Voice would very much welcome the opportunity to exchange ideas with Ballymore regarding one of our projects. This is the relocation of the Brentford Fountain from Hayes to Brentford. Until 1974 the Fountain was located on the northern approach to Kew Bridge. We have identified a number of possible sites in Brentford and one of those is adjacent to St. Lawrence's Church on land that is not in the ownership of Ballymore.

- 2 Brentford Voice has carried out a substantial amount of research on some aspects of the site including the history of St. Lawrence's Church and the Ronalds family. We have also identified the names and other details of approaching 5,000 individuals who are buried within the Church, the church graveyard, and the cemetery extension. We would be delighted to share this if it may be of interest to you.