

to Daniel Murphy,  
Investment Opportunities Officer,  
Dept of Housing, Planning and Communities  
London Borough of Hounslow,  
Hounslow House, 7 Bath Road.  
TW3 3EB

ref: BCC883. October 2020

Dear Mr Murphy

### **Brentford Town Centre Consultation**

I am writing on behalf of the Brentford Community Council to respond to your consultation on Brentford Town Centre.

The Brentford Community Council was set up by Hounslow Council, among others, in 1988 to provide a forum where council officers could obtain the views of local residents before reporting to standing committees. Since then the BCC has become a locally funded, independent, non-party amenity society. We are recognized stakeholders. We have given our views on most of the planning policy statements and planning applications in Brentford since then.

Individual BCC members were active participants in the Brentford High Street Steering Group, which worked on plans for the High Street for many years. Their initiative led to the footprint on which the integrated design for the South Side of the High Street is based.

The following are a few notes which might contribute to further development in the Brentford Town Centre:

#### **1. Protecting the Town Centre from excessive through traffic.**

Traffic lights have been installed at South Ealing Road and Syon Lane which could be set to divert more through traffic from Brentford High Street to the A4 especially at peak traffic times. This would allow safe crossing of the High Street and enable the north side and the south side to be integrated.

#### **2. Cycles.**

The detail design of the new cycle lanes should be carefully integrated into the public realm. Sufficient cycle stands will be required to provide for shoppers and residents.

### **3. Public Space.**

The wide north side pavement offers opportunities to further planting, for kiosks and seating and for extending café frontages to provide more outdoor seating. Bus lay byes could also be provided on both sides of the road. A high standard of street furniture and strong guidance on shop front design and notices is required.

### **4. The Morrison and Police Building sites.**

We regret that planning consent was granted to demolish the Morrison supermarket and car park and to excavate the whole site to the level of the High Street and to re-provide new shops with housing above. Fortunately, the demolition has been delayed and so Brentford does retain a local supermarket for the time being. In 2022/3 the new supermarket and phase 1 shops on the South side will open.

However, it is apparent that shopping on-line is in the ascendent and there may not be a demand for new retail space on the Morrison site so close to the Ballymore development. If the Osterley Tesco is re-provided it could adversely effect retail trade in the Town Centre.

We hope that a careful analysis will be made of the long term future demand for retail space before the design of the Morrison site is finalised.

This might also give an opportunity for the design of block A on the Morrison site to be re-considered. Residents in the St Pauls CA rightly objected to the height of block B facing Back Lane. Unfortunately block A was increased to compensate. As a result, views along the north side of the High Street are closed by the excessively high block A, immediately behind the Bee Hive public house.

The adjacent Police building is awaiting re-development, linked to an application to replace the Waterman Arts Centre with high cost housing. That application is currently out to appeal. The BCC supported the objections made by Historic England that the proposed housing would harm the setting of Kew Palace across the river.

If the appeal results in the objection being upheld there would be a further opportunity to reconsider plans for the redevelopment of the police building as an all residential block.

## **5. Half Acre.**

Half Acre links the town centre to the railway station. The road is the public transport gateway to the town centre. The BCC consider that the pavements should be widened, planted with urban trees and that support should be given for the frontages to be improved. Particular care is required at the corner of Half Acre and Lion Lane.

These improvements might be achieved if Half Acre was made "one way" going south, with South Ealing Road being a "one way" street going north. This would also bring the 65 bus route closer to the Town Centre, which would improve the town Centre's catchment for public transport users.

## **6. The North Side.**

It is understood that, apart from Goddards, the Council own the whole of the north side and that leases are due to fall in in 2027. This gives an opportunity for comprehensive redevelopment. In our view the Goddards building should be re-developed with the Council frontage to one master plan.

The brief for the redevelopment of the North Side block should reflect the changes that are made to all the other parts of the Town Centre and the increase in on-line shopping. The review suggested in para 4 (above) might indicate whether there was any requirement for retail space.

This might be an opportunity to construct an underground swimming pool. This would go some way to provide these facilities when the obsolete Fountain Centre is closed. The pool could be part of a new leisure strategy to provide a variety of facilities across Brentford, Osterley and Chiswick.

## **7. Watermans.**

The BCC originally proposed replacing the existing Waterman building with facilities at the very centre of Brentford Town Centre. The advantage would have been that arts would become an integral part of everyday life. A shopping trip could be combined with a café which was in turn an art gallery linked to a library, linked to a book shop. As Ballymore developed their designs space reserved for the centre was relegated to a distant part of their scheme and the BCC concluded that it would be better for the Arts Centre to remain on its riverside site than to move to an inappropriate one on Half Acre.

However, it might be possible to build Waterman's on the north side of the town centre if the design for the replacement housing on its present site could be modified to overcome the harm it might do to Kew Palace. This

location would bring the Arts Centre very close to the daily shopping pattern of residents.

A new Watermans should focus on a large flexible space with tables for eating with a number of restaurant/café outlets as well as space for art exhibitions, a library and bookshop. The centre should also provide a studio theatre and cinema and space for artists to work.

### **8. Housing.**

Policy SC8 in the 2015 Local Plan considers the need for Specialist and Supported Housing. We have an ageing population and the need for this type of accommodation is likely to increase. Located in our town centre immobile residents would have all the facilities at hand.

### **9. Increasing the site.**

As redevelopment of the north side is not likely before 2027 there should be time to discover whether other sites around Lion Way might be available.

### **10. Comprehensive Planning.**

As the plans for the sites around the town centre are reviewed they should be related to an updated masterplan. The emphasis should be on quality, not quantity and all new development should respect the scale, character and height of the former Magistrates Court.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Browne  
Chair, Brentford Community Council

Denis Browne  
Planning Advisor BCC.