

Minutes of an meeting on 14 December 2020 at 7.30 pm

Ref MinDec20

Venue: Online

1. Present: Stephen Browne (Chair) (SB), Chris Dakers (CD), Derek Collett (DC), Hugh Mortimer (HM), Barbara Stryjak (BS, OWGRA), Jim Storrar (JS, Brentford Voice), John Ricketts (JR, Kew Society), Cllr John Todd (JT), Cllr Mel Collins (MC)

2. Apologies: Richard Linnell (RL), Denis Browne (DB)

3. Tesco & Homebase planning application – update.

3.1 JS outlined the Stage 1 referral letters from The Mayor of London to Hounslow Council prior to the applications going to the Planning Committee, setting out the acceptability of the applications to the GLA in policy terms. JS indicated Local groups had wished for more stronger statements regarding items such as percentage of affordable housing and the impact on heritage assets – views from Syon Park, views from surrounding conservation areas, impact on the Gillette building. There were also concerns about the lack of local transport provision and possibly a statement on the energy provision. JS offered the letters had nothing of any significance against the developments but did mention some minor amendments that would see the applications conform to The London Plan. In summary the letters comprised of surprising and disappointing content.

3.2 BS stated the letters contained a degree of contradiction, where they said harm was being done to the heritage assets but would then say it was not substantial harm. OWGRA were reviewing the letters in detail and would make comments on specific detail within and circulate to JS and DB over the Christmas period where nothing was expected to happen. The option of just forwarding on comments already made to the planning committee was seen as not covering specifics of the Mayors letters directly. BS also noting encouraging statements about no renewable energy and the lack of centralised heating such as that used within Sky HQ. It also appeared the letters may have been a rush job with typos (Gillet) and paragraph numbering errors but nonetheless replies to both the GLA and Hounslow Planning were to follow. However it appears that the housing need trumps all other concerns particularly when there were to be houses (only 14%) and the transport assessment was way of reality.

3.3 JS offered there had been written exchanges between the Mayor of London and Robert Jenrick on The London Plan where the latter was not impressed with the content and had concerns on the policy regarding tall buildings but the Mayor was to publish it anyway.

3.4 JR Asked if there was any idea on how the Hounslow Planning Committee might vote. BS replied enquiries on that were yet to be answered but they would request a well attended planning committee for such large applications (not on Zoom) with presentations etc prior to any decision being made with the public watching via Zoom. It is not felt such large planning applications can be determined in the Zoom environment.

3.5 JR offered that Keith Garner (consultant at RBG) had taken Shane Baker (planning officer) around Kew Gardens and shown him some vistas from Kew Gardens looking north to the Gillette building.

3.6 BS stated Paul Velluet was to also send a rebuttal regarding heritage views followed by contradictory statements within the letters regarding harm to Kew Garden assets.

3.7 Cllr Collins joined the meeting at this point and was asked for comments. MC responded he had requested these applications to be heard by a full planning committee but had not heard

back as yet. MC followed with comments about the 17 story building relative to the Northumberland Estate and the nearby Gillette Building along with its effect on wider infrastructure issues.

3.8 BS gave an update that indicated objections had been submitted to the council, they were waiting on the important TfL report (due last week) and were trying to find out what Sky's response has been, adding if it were any other council this information would be publicly available but in Hounslow it required taking councilors time to access such information. In the meantime OWGRA were emailing councilors on the planning committee with specific point by point reasons to reject the applications. OWGRA also took advantage of lockdown ending and publicly displayed their 3D model at the Osterley Garden Centre and outside Homebase engaging the public in both places who were quite shocked about the size of the buildings. It appears the footprint of the consultation area as determined by the planners, was far too small for the size of the application, which OWGRA was addressing with letterbox drops.

3.9 Cllr JT and BS discussed the 35% affordable proportion of the application. BS stated their concerns were more over the volume of smaller apartments versus houses in the application. Whilst developers could plan what they wished a fair amount of the properties would be sold overseas and did not necessarily remedy any affordable housing concerns. MC and BS discussed what 'affordable' actually meant with regard not only to these applications but many others of late. BS noted a recent Ealing planning application was refused because it contained the wrong type of affordable housing. JS offered that whilst Hounslow had a 40% affordable level for applications the GLA would fast track anything over 35%.

3.10 JS finished on the concerns of these large applications being at each end of the Great West Corridor setting a height and mass precedent that would considerably exacerbate the transport, health and other infrastructure issues already experienced.

3.11 Final comments on infrastructure levies discussed the payments made on the back of not achieving affordable percentages where the funds paid enabled affordable housing and/or infrastructure improvements elsewhere in the borough. Carbon offsets was tabled as another example for assisting planning application success.

4. 50 London Road planning application – update.

4.1 SB started with the general mystery about a change to the original application for this site – BCC and BV had not been notified. JS noted the pending applications list had been published and the planning meeting had already approved changes before many of the public had heard of changes. Discussions on the lack of regard of public views ensued, along with the careful placement in the calendar of change requests by the applicants.

5. Griffin Park – update.

5.1 SB stated via DC rumours of a block of apartments in the middle of Griffin Park were now circulating where the original plan was just for 76 houses surrounding the grounds. JS confirmed the original and rumoured update by EcoWorld for 150 residences including a block of apartments up to the height of the current grandstand. It was noted EcoWorld also develop jointly within the Hounslow Borough with Hounslow Council.

5.2 BS said despite requests to them on percentages of local versus overseas purchasers in local EcoWorld developments information was not forthcoming.

6. Behind Kew Bridge Station – update.

6.1 SB noted via DC this rather small development had made an application to increase the height of their development seemingly just because the EcoWorld development behind them was a lot higher.

6.2 HM noted the letter of objection from the Kew Society was excellent and should be used as a model of 'how to object' for community groups.

6.3 JR reiterated 'planning by precedent' should not be the rule of approval.

7. Brentford Voice Brentford Identity Survey.

7.1 JS advised these surveys are very useful to develop a vision for Brentford excluding the Town Centre which has already had major sections planned and approved (the Brentford Project). JS indicated the different parts of the surveys such as cultural etc but the most highlighted topic was the 'waterside' and as such any waterside strategy in any planning is very important and that it was sadly missing from the Brentford Project application. The next stage to be undertaken by Hounslow Council on conservation which should be taking place in January next year.

7.2 With respect to the waterside the height of Block K was discussed which is where the crane is on the Ballymore site and how the height of the tallest building could be gauged against the crane. It remained a surprise to many in the meeting how high these buildings are despite knowing the floor heights for some years.

7.3 SB noted the promotion of the Brentford Project in BA's in flight magazine and in Singapore newspapers demonstrated a global purchasing audience was being targeted. HM asked whether the current promotional images on the hoardings etc truly demonstrated the final build.

8. Planning White Paper update.

8.1 JS stated there seemed to be some internal party opposition regarding the standard assessment of housing demand largely at the request of councils surrounding London who felt they were 'hostages to fortune' by the new process. JS continued that at the recent G15+ meeting attended by Steve Curran and planners including Peter Matthew Executive Director of Housing for Hounslow Council who has the opinion this is not a white paper but a green paper and with the omission of a 'command number' he would be surprised if this paper ever saw the light of day.

9. AOB.

9.1 Ballymore Car Park: HM asked if anyone had seen the 'apparent art' that was adorning the temporary car park on the Ballymore site and was not aware of any consultation around the application which was approved in a mere 8 days. JS replied it didn't need a planning application at first but because it included the word 'Brentford' (directional information) it did require an advertising application, which was readily and hastily approved.

9.2 JS continued it was a shame that local artists could have been consulted or other opportunities were not taken up by Ballymore. It is a conditional application for five years and is not the final cladding of the car park which includes apartments on the western side of the car park. HM re-stated his view Ballymore seem to participate in community involvement to 'tick the box' as opposed to listening to any suggestions offered.

9.3 St Lawrence Vicarage: JR enquired about the vicarage. JS stated the application to demolish was passed several years ago and as such the only interest now was as to any remains or archaeology findings under it.

10. The meeting closed at 9.00pm

11. Date of Next Meeting: 11 January at 7.30 pm