

Shane Baker, Development Control
By email.

Ref: BCC 807 dmb
July 15 2017.

Dear Shane,

Pre App Exhibition: Proposals for Watermans Arts Centre and Housing at Half Acre and for Housing on the present Watermans Site.

Members of the BCC visited this exhibition and considered their views on the current proposals at a meeting of the Planning Consultative Committee on July 10 2017.

It was noted that there were no plans or schedules of accommodation at the exhibition, but in discussion with representatives of the design teams it appeared that:

1. The Arts Centre would be re-located at the ground and basement levels of the Police Building site in Half Acre. That the Arts Centre would NOT be as drawn on drawings 570/SK02/5,(shared with us previously), but would be very similar in size to the present Arts Centre.
2. That the proposal for about 100 flats above would differ little from the previously submitted drawing no 015_SK_001.
3. That the proposal for approximately 197 high cost flats on the present Waterman site would follow almost the same footprint as that shown in an earlier drawing A233/P103.

We have written to you before, urging the applicant and the Council to consider other options for the provision of housing and for promoting the excellent work done by Watermans, which has recently received new encouragement from the Arts Council.

We were sorry to see that the current proposals adhere to the original concept and that none of the original objections have been overcome.

Watermans occupies a unique site. It is able to offer both an enterprising programme as an arts centre, with support from clients over a wide area, and a unique setting.

To build a new centre in the basement of a site on the edge of Brentford District Centre without parking is to reduce the offer. The centre could not rely on its present wide catchment area for support, nor would it be central enough in our town centre to attract sufficient walk in custom.

Its depressing location and its limited facilities could well result in it becoming a white elephant.

With a new Arts Centre on the river at Hammersmith about to open and with further competition planned in our area, Watermans needs to retain and expand its clientele on its present special site.

In order to fund the new Arts Centre new flats are proposed both at Half Acre and on the Waterman's site.

We have already written to you about the design of the Half Acre flats, which are to be built in two parallel blocks only 18m apart. Although we understand that they technically conform to London guidelines those flats, which look onto the narrow court will be bleak, dark and lacking in privacy.

However, the greatest loss would be the present enjoyment of our river on the Watermans site. The proposal is to build 5 closely spaced blocks, higher than those on the adjacent Albany House site, which would block out a further stretch of the Thames for Brentford residents.

Additionally, these flats would increase the wall of building facing Kew Palace and Kew Gardens. We understand that both Kew Gardens and the Royal Palaces have registered strong objections.

The BCC support these objections and asks Historic England to request the Secretary of State to call in any application so that he could determine it.

Yours sincerely

Denis Browne
Chairman, Planning Consultative Committee
Brentford Community Council