

New Consultations Start

Beginning again

A new process leading to a fresh application to develop the Campion House site is about to start.

The developer Linden Homes (formerly Try Homes) has employed new architects: John Thompson & Partners (JTP) who will also handle the community consultation side of things.

Campion Concerns has had an initial meeting with JTP to discuss the consultation process. No proposals have yet been put forward.

JTP were keen to emphasise that they wanted the fullest possible participation since they believe that it is very important that projects such as Campion should have community support.

Multi-Stage

JTP will launch the first stage of consultation on Saturday 20th October. Their programme for the day will include introductions, site visits and workshops. (Planners, councillors and Campion Concerns will attend a short preparatory meeting on the 19th.)

They say that they would like to get as much as they can from residents about all aspects of a future development. They want to know what residents see as problems and if possible what they regard as possible solutions.

The workshop sessions are intended, they say, to be 'hands on' sessions in which residents consider different aspects of a future design and develop their own ideas.

Parameters Should Be Clear

We pointed out that one of the major problems of the so-called consultation organised by Green Issues Communications in November '05 was that despite requests for the background and constraints to the development to be made clear no information was provided. JTP agreed such information was required.

It should also be clear to everyone that residents have learned a lot from the previous experience

and that this time many of them will go to the consultation rather better informed than they did the first time round.

No Plan Yet

JTP emphasised that they have no design for the site yet and that they will wait for residents' reactions and suggestions before moving to that stage. They say that they will produce design material, following residents' input, and that this will be brought back for further consultation.

We said that normally a design process should include the presentation of different design solutions to identified problems and that this had been missing from the previous 'consultation' process. JTP agreed that it was important to look at alternative solutions.

Things Could Move Fast

We discussed various dates to start the consultation process. JTP decided that the 20th October would be good given various factors such as the availability of local meeting places. We pointed out that the 20th is the beginning of half-term but left it to them to judge its suitability.

JTP know that a high level of residential interest has been shown in the Campion development. It is important that this interest is also demonstrated in the development of the next application.

CAMPION CONSULTATION Please try to be there

**St Mary's Church Hall
Saturday 20th October
11.00 am – 4.30 pm**

(Details to be circulated by JTP)

The high level of residential response was a key factor in the rejection of the last application. If that response is to continue to impact on the development then a high level of participation is essential.

If you can't be there

There are bound to be reasons why some residents can't attend the consultation on 20th October. If you can't but would like to be involved then we suggest that you contact JTP (and us) to say so.

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Email: info@jtp.co.uk
(for the attention of Charles Campion)

Who is JTP?

We will, of course, find out for ourselves through the consultation process. We can only hope that they are more interested in residents' views than Green Issues Communications (who dealt with community consultation for the previous applications). They tell us that they are convinced of the importance of full residential information and participation.

To find out more about the company and the sort of projects it has been involved with you can visit their website at www.jtp.co.uk.

Campion Concerns

We are a group of residents who got together because of concerns about the proposals to develop the Campion House site. If you would like to contribute by coming to meetings and joining in the work that has to be done to keep residents informed then please contact us

The reality is ...

The eighteen months from the first developer contacts to the Inspector's refusal of their appeal were instructive. This experience showed that the people who said "there is nothing you can do, it's all a done deal" were wrong. There was something we could do and we did it!

The approaches from JTP are encouraging but we all need to keep our feet on the ground. The development of the site is a commercial operation in which the developer will hope to make as much profit as possible.

JTP will organise the consultation but they do so on behalf of the developer. This does not mean that they will not do a thorough and professional

job it just means that we need to remember that interests are involved and those interests are tied up with substantial amounts of money.

The more that everyone is clear about such basic facts the more realistic and honest the consultation process is likely to be. Participation is better than pontification.

Distributors Needed

Some of our Newsletter distributors have moved since the last application to develop the Campion site. If you would be willing to help then please contact us (even very small rounds are a great help). Contact details on first page.

Graffiti removed

After some weeks of effort the developer agreed to remove offensive graffiti which had appear on Campion House. This coincided with damage of a similar nature to many residents' cars. The



police placed cameras in the street and now say that they have arrested and charged the person they believe to be responsible.

Funds getting low

One reason for our success so far has been the generous contributions we have received. A double-sheet Newsletter like this one costs £70 to produce. We now have £150 left in our funds. It would be useful if these could be topped up for the next round. If you have not contributed so far then please consider doing so.

The Inspector's Report on Campion House

Background

The second Try Homes (now Linden Homes) application to develop the Campion House site was submitted in December 2006. It was refused by the Council's Sustainable Development Committee on 28th March 2007. Try Homes appealed to the Government's Planning Inspectorate. A Public Inquiry on the appeal was held 19th - 26th June 2007. The Inspector rejected the appeal and that is why the developer (now Linden Homes) is preparing to make a third application.

The Inspector's report is not long and is well worth reading. It sets the basic parameters for any subsequent development on the site. You can obtain the report from a link on the homepage of our website: <http://campionconcerns.org.uk>.

The rest of this Newsletter gives some idea of the Inspector's conclusions. We have paraphrased the Inspector's comments for maximum brevity.

1. Respect the historical plan for the area

Para 13. The original plan for the area (the Davies Plan) was never completed but it is still evident in the street layout and in many of the original houses which contribute much to the area.

2. 2/3 storey housing predominant opposite the site

Para 14. The immediate surroundings are primarily 2/3 storey developments. The Edwardian and Arts and Crafts houses opposite the site are of note. Their scale, materials and roofscape contribute much to the area. Spring Grove has a distinctive and established character.

3. Chapel of some interest

Para 15. The chapel of is some interest but the accommodation buildings make no positive contribution to the area. This is an opportunity to do better and enhance the area.

4. Predominant estate form inappropriate

Para 16. “.... in order to maximise the potential of the available development land, replication of the predominant estate form of development would not be particularly appropriate.”

5. Low transport rating/housing density

Para 16. Thornbury Road has a bus route but the site is a considerable distance from local stations and rather more than 10 minutes walk from the town centre. Its index for public transport accessibility is low (=2). The area is clearly suburban and consists of 2/3 storey housing. The indicative density range for development is 50-80 units per hectare.

6. Density not based on whole area

Para 17. Housing density calculations should be based only on the area of the site directly used for housing and incidental open space/landscaping. It should exclude areas used for public purposes. The developable area should be **at most** 2.26 hectares. (The site area is 3.26 hectares.)

7. Current building scale is domestic

Para 18. The current buildings are 3-storey and are separated by 20m. They are broken into key elements with openings which give the street elevation a more or less domestic scale.

8. Integrity of Campion/Thornbury House

Para 19. Selective demolition can enhance Campion House giving it a more open setting. The proposed villa to the north would be of an appropriate scale.

9. Courtyard appropriate but not as proposed

Para 20. A courtyard form would be appropriate on the southern part of the site. The proposed scheme was based on a formal quadrangle without any real explanation as to its appropriateness. It would introduce a large-scale building with no counterpart in the area.

10. Moat for semi-basement dwellings

Para 21. Campion House has a semi-basement but the proposed excavated 'moat' would be a more noticeable and incongruous feature of the street scene.

11. Southern cedar threatened

Para 22. “The basement excavation would come close to the southernmost cedar tree near Thornbury House. ... I am concerned that the fairly deep excavation may lead to the lowering of the water table around the tree ... The loss of this tree would have a major harmful impact on the character of the conservation area.”

12. Long continuous frontage harmful

Para 24. “ from almost every viewpoint the perception would be of a continuous frontage to Thornbury Road, some 100 metres long. In my view, the full height narrow courtyard entrance slot would do nothing to reduce the apparent length of frontage. ... The whole 100 metre frontage would be otherwise unchanged by variation in height or scale. At 4 to 5 storeys high above basement level, this would be unlike anything in the surrounding area.”

13. Inappropriate roof metal sheeting

Para 24. “... the long metal-sheeted roof accommodating the fifth and occasional sixth storey would be very apparent. The industrial scale roofs

would have a limited visual interest and their form and materials would be particularly incongruous.”

14. Projecting bays and 'crumbling corners' do not offset excessive mass

Para 25. The attempts to mitigate the impact of a large building with projecting bays, varied materials, and 'crumbling' corners would do little to diminish the bulk of the building or to reduce its impact on the street scene.

15. Campion House should stand out

Para 26. To make Campion House stand out it should not be “subsumed by a new development of an unrelenting similarity of height”. The existing street frontage already has a negative effect on the area. The excessive height and massing of the proposed building would make matters worse.

16. Failure to respect scale, density and layout of neighbouring buildings

Para 27. “... the proposed development would not be well-integrated with the scale, density and layout of the neighbouring buildings. Its courtyard form, massive bulk and long street elevation would have little respect for the well established character and appearance of the conservation area, and the design would fail to take the opportunity available for improving the character and quality of the area.”

17. Open space encroachment is about 20-25%

Para 29. “The footprint of the proposed building would encroach substantially into the area designated as local open space, perhaps by about 20-25% of its area.”

18. Landscaped frontage not publicly accessible open space.

Para 30. “...The landscaped frontage strip is not currently part of the area designated as local open space. This area would provide a degree of privacy for the basement bedrooms, and paths within it would lead to the building’s entrances. It is not an area which would naturally lend itself to use by the public, and I do not consider it reasonable to include this strip as part of the area of public open space.”

19. Courtyard enclosure

Para 31. “... I do not consider that an enclosed courtyard, entirely within the overall footprint of the building, can realistically be described as local open space. The courtyard is overlooked by dwellings, with front doors and access to private terrace areas on all sides and a main access from the basement car park in the centre. It would have the appearance of a private enclosed courtyard, discouraging public use

and unattractive to passers-by.”

20. Benefits of public access do not justify the loss of open space

Para 32. “On balance, I consider the benefits of public access insufficient to provide the very special circumstances necessary to outweigh the development plan policy objectives intended to prevent such a substantial loss of local open space.”

21. Compensation required for the loss of a sports pitch

Para 33. “There was originally a football pitch in the grounds. There is evidence to show that, at one time, it was used informally by local schools and others, as well as seminarians, but it has clearly not been used for some time. I am not convinced that it can be considered a playing field as such, worthy of retention. ... the real need is for improvement in the quality of the associated facilities. The appellant would make a substantial contribution to the improvement of community infrastructure, which could be used to provide higher quality sports facilities in an appropriate location.”

22. Design attempts to cram too much onto the site.

Para 36. “ ... I consider that the design attempts to cram far too much development onto the site, which is in a sensitive location. This attempt to achieve a large number of dwellings at an inappropriately high density has led to a scheme design which is over-large, monolithic, out of scale and far too intensive in use. I consider that the design has not been positively influenced by, or is at all compatible with, its local context. It would not knit in with its surroundings. It would harm the conservation area and lead to a significant loss of local open space. It would not contribute positively to making the area better for people and it would not respect the local character, context or community.”

23. Extra monies (S106) and special conditions could not solve the problems.

Para 37. “I consider on balance that the benefits of the development would be far outweighed by the substantial harm it would cause to the local area. This harm could not be overcome by conditions or by the provisions of the s106 planning obligation. I understand that the Council is meeting its housing targets so there is no overriding need for housing sufficient to outweigh the objections. Overall, I consider that the design is inappropriate in its particular context and that the scheme fails to take the opportunities available for improving or enhancing the character and quality of the area. It is not therefore acceptable.”