

Getting There - But Some Way To Go

A prolonged application process

The current (3rd) application to develop the Campion House site is turning out to be a prolonged affair. Since the application was submitted (26th March) there have been two significant revisions of the design and two further consultations.

You may not have heard

The Planning Department only sent consultation letters for the revisions to those who had previously written. The fact that the letters were sent in the usual 'generous' fashion (some residents received the same letter three times) should not obscure the fact that many were not informed at all of the latest changes.

A general slow-down

It is likely that the downturn in the housing market has taken some pressure off this development process as it has with many others.

Even if it were approved we cannot be certain that building would start any time soon.

Be that as it may, the application will be decided on at the **Sustainable Development Committee (SDC)** on **8th December**.

What Changes have been made?

The pressure for a development that conforms to planning guidelines and which is compatible with the area has been maintained by residents throughout the prolonged application process.

Often modifications to initial applications increase the number of units. Because of our continued pressure the opposite has happened in this case.

Going from initial application to first modification then second modification we have:

Number of units: from 168 to 160 to 154

Percentage affordable units: from 37.5 to 20 to 30.

We have no information of the split between social housing and part-ownership for the affordable housing.

Height reduction. No blocks along Thornbury Road

now rise above three storeys. Roof lines have also been modified to make them more varied.

The fifth level on the D block has been removed.

Block C has been slightly reduced.

Full details of the changes can be found by looking at the developer's drawings and/or by reading the Officers' report to the last meeting of the **Isleworth & Brentford Area Committee (IBAC)** - links for both on our website.

Why protect open space?

1. *Open space is a major asset for London for health and environmental reasons. The London Plan says that it must be "rigorously protected".*
2. *Open space protection is Objective No.1 of the London Plan.*
3. *If open space is traded for on a site-by-site basis, as at Brunel and other sites then London's total open space will continue to diminish.*

What problems remain?

The changes made are very welcome but they do not go all the way to ensuring that the development (1) is in conformity with planning guidelines and (2)

is compatible with the area.

We have campaigned on these two points from the very start of the process and there is no reason why we should give up on them now just because the developer has moved from proposing an outrageously out-of-character proposal to one which is within sighting distance of being a suitable development.

The key remaining problems are:

(1) The large loss of 'protected' open space (25-30%) is contrary to the planning policy commitment to protect open space. If we add all the current open space on this site and compare it to the proposal then there is a clear net loss of at least 25%.

(2) The development does not provide sufficient family homes. We do not accept that a development with 70% 1 and 2-bedroom units (13x1 bedroom, 96x2 bedroom) can be considered to meet the need for family units. Neither is it suitable for a suburban area of predominantly family housing.

**Please attend the Sustainable
Development Committee meeting
for the Campion decision at the
CIVIC CENTRE in Lampton Road
Mon 8th December at 7.30 pm**

Open space: a late “consultation”

The Government's planning guideline (**Planning Policy Guideline No.17**) requires that developers consult over changes to open space. It also requires them to demonstrate widespread support for their proposals among the local community. We have pointed this out repeatedly for the last three years.

It is therefore interesting that just two weeks before the Sustainable Development Committee meets to determine the Campion application, residents were called on by market researchers to ask for their views.

We don't know what area was covered by the research. Only some residents along Thornbury Road were called on. Residents in Thornbury Avenue were also approached. We would be pleased to have any other information you have about this.

The researchers told one resident that their work had been commissioned by the developer.

Many of the questions were designed to produce positive responses. Thus residents were asked something like “Do you think that the development will contribute towards meeting local housing need?”

The answer to this is of course “yes” (or 1/2 on a 1 to 5 scale). Practically *anything* built on the site would contribute to meeting local housing needs.

That is not the issue. The issue is whether those needs are being met in the most appropriate way.

This technique of asking questions that are bound to produce a positive response and then using them to claim overall support was used for the first Campion application. It was then claimed that 80% of residents supported the proposals i.e. the ones rejected by the Council and the Government Inspector.

It seems likely that a similar tactic is being employed again. We have asked **Marketing Sciences** for a copy of their questions and when and where the results will be made public. We will be in a position to make a proper analysis of any results when we are provided with these details.

The developer had to note residential opposition to encroachment on open space in the report of their consultation exercise at the end of '07 beginning of '08. So, it is interesting, not to say suspicious, that they should choose to commission a market research company to report on residents' views just two weeks before the Development Committee meets.

Even with the best will in the world questionnaires are hard to design so that they do not bias what they measure. The questions need to be discussed with interested parties and trialled. This did not happen.

What is a family home?

Both the current and previous London Mayors pointed out that London is being oversupplied with one and two-bedroom flats. All the significant recent developments in this area have consisted overwhelmingly of 1/2 bedroom flats.

Thus the Brunel development has 75% 1/2 bedroom flats. The Aura development on London Road has 82% and 661 London Road (old Wang building) has 92%.

The Hounslow Plan has as one of its top ten promises to “Bring new affordable family-sized homes into the Borough”. The intended outcome/performance indicator for this promise is that 35% of new dwellings built in the Borough should be three-bedroom plus.

It is clear that developments in and around the Spring Grove Conservation Area are not meeting this target. But even this does not bring out the full extent of the problem (see next section).

The developer says that since a two-bedroom flat can house four people it is a family home and that therefore the proposal consists mainly of family homes.

We say that the issue is whether or not two-bedroom homes meet the needs for a large number of families. It wouldn't even meet the needs of a family with two children of opposite sexes. It is also storing up overcrowding problems for the future.

The housing mix and local character

The problem with providing mainly 1/2 bedroom flats is even more serious when the surrounding area is considered. It is a

conservation area. It has a character and a great part of that character is that it consists mainly of family housing on 2/3 floors. These houses have three or more bedrooms.

The proposals meet neither the desire for more family homes as defined by the London Mayor, nor as defined by Hounslow. In addition they are out of character with the Spring Grove Conservation Area.

Other Issues

We have concentrated on two key issues (open space encroachment and the lack of family housing). We do not mean this to exclude a host of other issues that may concern you.

* Are blocks C and D too large? Do they defer to Campion House as required by the Inspector?

* Does it matter that key environmental issues (energy, water management) still await detailed solutions?

* Are the houses in the south-west corner too close to the floodlight Indian Gymkhana astroturf hockey pitch?

* Is block Hiv too close to the housing in Killberry Close.

Please raise whatever matters concern you.

Please send a brief letter/email or use the letter-form below

We have come a long way in three years of campaigning over the Campion applications. We started off with a monstrous proposal that would have blighted the area. That was stopped.

The current proposals are a vast improvement but that is not a reason not to insist on the full application of planning guidelines and that the development should harmonise with its surroundings.

Up until now we have encouraged residents to write detailed letters. Now the points have been made so often that **all that is required is a very short letter/email to make clear whether you support the application or not.**

If you have written before then we suggest that you could simply say *"I wish to maintain my objections to the Campion application sent to you previously"*.

If you have not written before, and if you agree with us, then you could write

"I wish to object to the Campion application because I do not agree with the loss of open space and also

because I think that the area needs larger units to meet the needs of families".

These are just suggestions. You may well want to use your own formulations. Please write whatever you think. But even if you are pressed for time we would urge you to let the Planning Department know your thoughts on the latest proposals.

If you have email this is likely to be the most convenient way of making your views count.

Send your letters/emails to

**Burnetta Van Stipriaan
The Planning Department
London Borough of Hounslow
The Civic Centre,
Lampton Road
Hounslow TW3 4DN**

Email:

burnetta.van-stipriaan@hounslow.gov.uk

N.B. The official Council consultation period has ended but your letters/emails will be counted right up to the 8th December – try to get them in earlier if you can.

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Hounslow TW3 4DN

Dear Ms Van Stipriaan,