

Linden Homes Appeal: 28th July

Linden Homes has appealed to the **Government Planning Inspectorate** against the Council's refusal of its third application to develop the Campion site.

The **Sustainable Development Committee (SDC)** rejected the application on 8th December 2008.

That refusal will be challenged at a four-day public inquiry starting on 28th July.

Grounds for objection

The SDC refused the application on three grounds:

1. "The development would encroach on Local Open Space in an area of Publicly Accessible Open Space Deficiency."

2. "The mix of housing is unsatisfactory by reason of failing to provide sufficient family homes (by providing mainly one- and two-bedroom flats), out of character with the Spring Grove Conservation Area."

3. "The proposed development, by reason of its size, design and appearance and landscaping, would have an undue adverse negative impact on the street scene and on the setting of Campion House and would not enhance the Spring Grove Conservation Area."

The SDC refusal was agreed with no votes to the contrary and only one abstention.

Comments on the refusal

We were pleased that the SDC view of the application was similar to ours even if we might not have worded the objections in exactly the same way.

1. The problem of open space encroachment is not a consequence of the area having a deficiency in public access to open space. It is a result of the need to protect London's net open space for ecological, cultural and psychological reasons. This space

should not be bargained away. Where there are strong reasons for building on open space (1) the support of local residents should be demonstrated and (2) land of equal quality should be released somewhere else in the vicinity. Neither of these conditions was met.

2. The objection on grounds of incompatibility with the area and the Borough and London Mayor's housing objectives should be backed up with an analysis of the local data.

3. There are aspects of the proposed design that would enhance the area and we have never denied that but there are problems (particularly with blocks C and D) and these should be focused on specifically. It would be a mistake to deny any merit to the proposal since this would detract from the criticism of its weak points.

The Inquiry Process

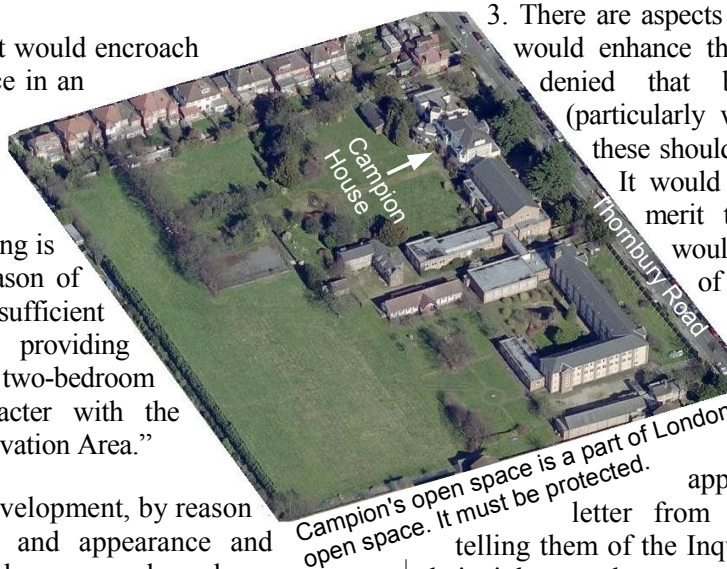
All residents who sent objections to the third application will receive a letter from the Planning Department telling them of the Inquiry and informing them of their right to make representations to the Inspector. If you did not write you still have the right to make representations and details of what you need to do will be in our next Newsletter.

Sharpen your quills

Get ready to make your views known to the Inspector. The design for this development has improved a great deal because of your letters on previous occasions.

The next Newsletter

Our next Newsletter will be circulated after the Planning Department has sent out its letters to residents. It will suggest detailed grounds for objecting and will explain how to send those objections to the Appeal Inspector.



How did we get here?

A brief history of the development

A story of three applications

This has been a long campaign so a brief summary of events may help.

APPLICATION 1. The developer **Try Homes** (later to become **Linden Homes**) organised two public meetings through the public relations firm **Green Issues Communications (GIC)** in Nov' 2005.

These meetings purported to seek a consensus of residents' views as to the desirable features of a development. When **GIC** issued its report we said that its conclusions were spurious and had little to do with even its own data. It was a put-up job to justify what the developer had already decided.

We showed that **GIC's** method of consulting was transparently one of massaging opinion to draw conclusions reached in advance.

Try Homes subsequently dispensed with the services of Green Issues Communications.

Try Homes proposed a development for 273 homes based on a monstrous block along Thornbury Road. Some of the open space on the site was offered for public access. There would also have been building on some of the open space.

The design was awful, the open space encroachment was unacceptable and the whole development would have been completely out of character with the area.

The proposal was rejected by the **SDC**.

APPLICATION 2. This was a re-jig of **Application 1**. It was carried out by the original architects **Clarke-Renner Architects**. It reduced the number of homes to 239 and made other changes which left the main block along Thornbury Road intact. It was also rejected by the **SDC** on 28th March 2007

Try Homes subsequently dispensed with the services of Clarke-Renner Architects.

PUBLIC INQUIRY No.1. A six-day public inquiry to consider the **Try Homes** appeal against the refusal of its second application was held in June 2007. The Inspector rejected the appeal and said that the proposals were completely out of character with the area.

The **Try Homes** agent for the Inquiry was Richard Tilley of **CgMs Consulting**. Their array of experts did not prevent them from turning in a decidedly poor performance.

Try Homes appear to have dispensed with the services of CgMs Consulting (some time after the refusal of the third application).

APPLICATION 3. **Linden Homes** (formerly **Try Homes**) started the process for a third application through the architectural and public consultation company **John Thompson and Partners (JTP)**.

JTP organised many meetings with residents and met with **Campion Concerns** in an effort to produce a design which would enhance the area. For the first time the consultations took note of residents' views.

All the same we were concerned, and said so, that **JTP** was working to unreasonable constraints which we presumed were imposed by **Linden Homes**.

Thus, at the first public meeting there was an effort to get us to accept that some encroachment on open space might be a reasonable quid pro quo if the design was of a high standard. None of us agreed.

Be that as it may, most agreed that **JTP's** design was a big improvement on those of **Clarke-Renner**.

Our position throughout was, however, that encroachment on open space should not be treated as a prize for good design. It is a London-wide requirement that open space should be protected. Open space is not something that should be bargained away on a site-by-site basis.

We also pointed out that the predominance of two-bedroom flats (1) did not match the pattern of known demand and (2) was out of character with the area.

Finally, we argued that blocks C and D of the proposed development were too bulky and had resulted from an effort to squeeze too much on to the site.

The councillors on the **SDC** came to the same conclusions as us and rejected the application on the above three grounds.

(Linden Homes' agent for the inquiry is Douglas Bond of Woolf Bond Planning.)

Keeping Track of The Appeal

The Planning Inspectorate's case IDs for the appeal are **2099169** and **2098830**

No documentation is available on the appeal at the time of writing. To track application go to:

www.pcs.planningportal.gov.uk/pcsportal/caserearch.asp