

Portmore Park & District Residents Association

Chairman: Michael Freeman

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David Shorland
The Planning Inspectorate
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Temple Quay
Bristol BS1 6PN

Dear Sir,

Appeal Ref: APP/K3605/A/08/2065907 - Demolition of existing office building & its replacement with a block of flats comprising 55 flats

Appeal by: Courtyard Property Group

Appeal Site: 39 Thames Street, WEYBRIDGE, Surrey, KT13 8JL

I am writing on behalf of the Portmore Park and District Residents Association which covers the roads adjoining the site. We have obtained and reviewed the grounds for the appeal.

This part of Weybridge is a high density, mixed community. Residential properties consist of smaller Victorian houses, a few large remaining Victorian/ Edwardian villas (further away), more modern houses on developments which have replaced earlier properties, social housing, and (off Thames St) estates originally built by the local council.

All the reasons for our original objection still stand. Our comments here relate to three of them: change of use, adverse impact on the amenity of the area, and traffic. We have noted that the fact that appeal documents have not been available on the usual websites, and are concerned that many potential interested parties will not be aware of the details of the appeal.

Change of Use

Historically, the community was well served by local employment. Many of these former business areas have been developed as housing, with this part of Weybridge increasingly becoming a dormitory town.

While the loss of industrial sites is understandable, the loss of potential for small businesses and office space is more controversial and does have an impact. We have noted the appellant's comment about the building having been empty for some time, but presume that if the terms and conditions are favourable, the site could be attractive to occupiers. Where buildings require extensive modernisation, we have noted examples of other sites in Elmbridge and Runnymede which have been demolished and replaced with modern offices. It may be that it has now been left too late at this immediate stage of business cycle to take early advantage of these opportunities, but they will continue to exist when the market recovers and we submit that the potential should not be irretrievably lost.

Scale and Character of the Area

It is a prominent site, overlooked by around thirty residential properties: in Dorchester Road, Darnley Park, Gascoigne Road, Farnell Mews, Montrose Walk and Thames Street. All will be affected by a proposal of this scale and bulk, and the impact on some of these properties will be dramatic. The current building is set away from the boundaries, unlike the proposal.

We note that the site has been described as not having any specific distinguishing features. One of the features for local residents has been the trees established over the years to screen the site from neighbouring properties.

We submit that the building will dominate and be out of sympathy with the area.

We documented our concerns in our original objection, and have not repeated them here.

Traffic and Parking

The site is in very close proximity to one junior school, while Thames Street also acts as a main access road to another (St James). The road suffers major congestion at times of the "school run". Much of this traffic is not through traffic but is seeking to stop and drop-off or await passengers. In addition, it has to find a way of returning in the opposite direction.

In addition to the traffic, the road has to provide on-street parking for residents and for employees/ visitors to the school. By comparison, the current use of the site as an office block has extensive on-site parking.

Traffic along Thames Street has, for many years, been a major issue. We consider that any additional, consequential on-street parking will aggravate an already difficult situation. We do not believe that parking provision on site will be adequate and, if allocated, will not be fully utilisable at all times. In addition, the site could be expected to generate considerable traffic itself.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Freeman