

Head of Planning Services
Elmbridge Borough Council
Civic Centre, High Street
Esher, Surrey, KT10 9SD

Portmore Park & District Residents Association
c/o 3 Clinton Close
Weybridge, Surrey, KT13 8NU
31 May 2022

Dear Head of Planning Services

Re: 2022/0980 - St Catherine's Thames Street Weybridge Surrey KT13 8JR

I am writing on behalf of the Committee of Portmore Park & District Residents Association to object to this application on the grounds of:

- Highly negative impact on the street scene
- Loss of essential softening effect which green landscaping on this prominent corner has on the future views of the new development
- Loss of existing landscape contribution to the character of the area
- Potential medium or long-term damage to a significant protected yew tree.

It is extraordinary that a developer should propose putting an electricity substation in this prominent location, compromising required green landscaping and highly visible from the public highway in an arc of 270 degrees.

The proposed structure would be completely unsympathetic with the landscaping which was essential to granting of consent for the St Catherine's development. It appears to reflect a failure of the original application to comply with basic regulations.

It seems very unlikely that the Planning Inspectorate would have overturned EBC's refusal of 2019/0386, and allowed the St Catherine's development had it included a substation prominently in view from both Thames Street and Beales Lane, detracting from the enhancing effect of the green verges.

Elmbridge refused 2019/0386 because of

1/ Height and massing out of keeping with the character of the area

2 / Changed landscape failing to integrate with surroundings

"Due to the loss of trees and green spaces around the building, which are considered to provide high landscape contribution towards the character of the area, the proposal fails to enhance and integrate into its surroundings. As such, the proposal is contrary to Policy DM6 of the Elmbridge Development Management Plan 2015."

The Planning Inspector, in allowing the development on appeal, specifically identified the green spaces and trees and landscaping as important in softening the building's negative impact on the character of the area, and the role of the green verges in enhancing appearance.

The Inspector notes that the permitted 2019/0386 substation location on the Thames Street would be largely screened by the boundary treatment and proposed landscaping,

and ***“the grass verges fronting the building offer some relief to the built forms along Beales Lane and in views from Thames Street. These verges along with associated planting enhance the appearance of the area. Notable amongst this local green infrastructure is the protected Yew tree...”***

and overall ***“the proposed landscaping would establish strong green frontages to the building thereby enhancing the visual appearance of the site and the public domain.”***

In awarding no costs against EBC, the Inspector acknowledged that the EBC reasons for refusal had been reasonable.

The proposed new location of the substation would significantly compromise the essential softening and screening of the new development. It would be a sore thumb in a highly prominent position, visible from public highway from three directions.

Misrepresentation of the current situation

We note that that the application’s Fig 18. EAST ELEVATION – THAMES STREET – PROPOSED STREET SCENE WITH EXISTING TREES is a fiction. It shows formerly existing trees, which the developer has already cut down. Have the applicants visited the site since they cleared it?

Only the yew tree currently remains of the previous landscaping, and if this new application were permitted the view of this beautiful tree would become dominated by an electricity substation beneath its canopy, between its bole and the street.

The impact on the street scene, landscape and local character would be very damaging.

- 1/ A yew tree which has potential to live for fifteen hundred years should NOT have an electricity substation constructed under its canopy and potentially disturbing its root system.
- 2/ The protected yew is the one aesthetic redeeming feature of the permitted PA Housing design, softening the impact on the street scene of a massive development. The substation would have a highly negative impact in such an extraordinarily inappropriate location.

We believe it is essential that EBC refuse this application, and require a far less prominent and damaging location for the substation, out of sight from the road and not interfering with the required landscaping.

Yours sincerely

Miles Macleod
Chair, Portmore Park & District Residents Association