

LOWER SUNBURY RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

HAZELWOOD ACTION GROUP & SUNBURY OPPOSES LONDON IRISH DEVELOPMENTS

Minutes of Public Meeting held at S. Mary's Village Hall on Thursday 23rd February at 8.15 pm

Present

LOSRA: John Hirsh (JH) Chairman, London Irish: John Conlan (JC), Maurice O'Connell (MO), Andy Martin (AM), Kelvin Campbell of Urban Initiatives (KC)

Approx 88 members of the public and committee members

Apologies for Absence

Paul Watts, Ron Pettifor, Tom O'Keefe, Cllrs. R Dunn, S Dunn, T Evans, A. Friday, S Webb

John Hirsh said the purpose of the meeting was to hear details of the alternative planning application that LI intended to submit to SBC for the development of The Avenue site. Following a 12 day appeal in June 2011, the previous applications for The Avenue and Hazelwood, were dismissed by the Planning Inspector and the Secretary of State on narrow grounds. For The Avenue these were insufficient social housing and no requirement under housing targets. The SoS said Hazelwood would have succeeded if it were not an enabling application. LI were attending this meeting at LOSRA's request. Regional Assemblies have since been abolished and therefore, possibly, SBC's housing targets. This is a moot point and has not been tested.

Kelvin Campbell showed plans of the alternative application for The Avenue. He said LI have taken legal advice regarding housing needs. There are 146 houses with an increase in the number of 3, 4 and 5 bed houses and introduces a 60 unit retirement home. The minimum density of 35 units per hectare has been fulfilled. There is no care home, medical centre or apartments. There will be 35% affordable housing (part of which is to be commuted) consisting of social rent and shared ownership. LI have had pre-application discussions with SBC over the last 4-5 weeks. There are no outstanding planning issues. There are design codes in place applying to architecture, open space etc. This application, together with the 2 original applications will be submitted on 15h March, 2012. LI are confident they have overcome any objections raised to the originals, but prefer the alternative plans. The affordable housing will be on the north side of the site, with the retirement home backing on to Pinewood.

Various questions and comments were raised during and after the presentation. It was apparent that none of the audience approved of any of the applications and were concerned about the effects of so many new houses and residents in the area.

This is only outline planning application. LI will sell to a developer who could submit different plans. It was suggested that if LI cared about Lower Sunbury they would introduce a covenant into the contract of sale, that prevented any detrimental changes. This was not taken up by LI.

The local health centre and schools are struggling to cope with the existing population of the area. This is not the responsibility of LI, but LI will be making Section 106 payments.

KC said LI will comply with planning regulations and they were encouraged by SBC to submit the applications. MO said clear guidelines were given by SBC. Lawrence Nichols asked LI to explain why SBC were appearing to encourage LI to not apply the LDF and breach their own rules. No answer was forthcoming, so JH explained that when including the retirement home units, the numbers were met.

KC said LI were submitting 2 applications for The Avenue as they are certain they will get consent on at least one. If it has to go to appeal they will be entitled to costs.

When asked why LI could not continue to play at The Avenue, JC said LI were responding to the demands of the amateur club. JC then said LI have the option to buy Hazelwood. Don Cunningham queried this and JC said he guaranteed that LI have a valid agreement. The option was renewed "a few weeks ago".

MO said Hazelwood would be developed prior to any building on The Avenue, which would start 2014-15. He reckoned it would be 6 years overall before the project was completed. LI need capital to develop Hazelwood.

DC stressed that normal procedures have to be followed for the Hazelwood application and we can still fight them.

JH said that pre-application discussions with SBC are normal procedure. There are no guarantees that the application will be approved by the Planning Committee.

JC said the first team had a contract to play at Reading until 2026. There is no intention of the firsts playing at Hazelwood. There will be no temporary grandstand.

JH It is the responsibility of the PCT to provide for the community. MC said LI were contributing £600k under Section 106 requirement. JH said we must ensure it is spent here.

In conclusion, JH said we can only deal with the plans in front of us now. There is no guarantee that outline planning permission will be used for the development only that there will be a development. JH is meeting with Heather Morgan & John Brooks of Planning at SBC on Monday 27th and will ask the questions raised. The applications will be put on the LOSRA website as soon as they are available and letters of objection should be sent to SBC in the normal way.

JH thanked everyone present for attending and closed the meeting at 9.55pm.