

App/Z3635/W/21/3280090: The Old Telephone Exchange, Masonic Hall and Adjoining land – Rejection Appeal by Inland Homes.

30th November 2021.

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I strongly object to this appeal by Inland Homes.

Unfortunately, I have no relevant qualifications to note in relation to this hearing, but I am an engaged and concerned long term resident and will say the following:

I will cover points under the following headings – Political, Local, Environmental, Planning and finally closing points.

Political

There is a moratorium in place at central Government level and we are still awaiting the Staines Master Plan. As we are still awaiting the Staines Master Plan, in my humble view, to allow this project will be entirely premature.

Local

96% of residence surveyed did not want high rise development.

There is a restriction, as I understand it, on building over 6 stories in the vicinity.

There is overwhelming local resistance to this project from councillors and residence, evidenced from local protests, correspondence and Facebook activity.

Environmental

Despite a focus at central government level and in the world on environmental impact, and this site in question being a matter of a few miles from the newly extended ULEZ Zone, Inland Homes propose to pull down the current buildings and build 16 and 14 story towers with hundreds more people concentrated in this small area. There has been no thought to repurposing the current buildings.

This building method is a heavy emitter of carbon emissions not only from the construction itself, but also from the very nature in it housing concentrated people in a small area. Does this local town, already just about managing with having the M25, Heathrow and being a stones through from the newly extended ULEZ zone, need more unnecessary carbon emissions? The impact on air quality must be considered here.

This is aside from the fact that minimum space high rise apartments, when people are now relying more on working from home and living with others due to the cost of living, is certainly not conducive to a happy and healthy life, both in mental and physical wellness.

Planning

206 dwellings of small 1 to 2 minimum space flats could mean, under my calculations, 412 and up to 824 more people from just this project in a concentrated area ... this could mean ...

- 1) Potentially 800 more cars
- 2) 800 car's worth more of traffic
- 3) 800 more people requiring medical and dental treatment
- 4) 800 more people requiring services from the Police

- 5) 800 more people requiring use of already stretched public transport links
- 6) Inadequate/not enough parking being stretched even further and even parking being removed by the demolition

Further points to also pick up on from my learned friend for Inland Homes are:

- 1) There are no car clubs in the local area. There is also no proposal from Inlands Homes to organise the same, so how can these car clubs, if not already here, be relied upon and if suggested, where would they go? Would such car club organisations even be minded to provide services in this area, where most people have their own vehicles and would it be financially viable for them?
- 2) The demographic that move into flats of this value are me and trust me, they/we all have and cherish our cars. This is especially the case as we have no night buses or late night transport in the area, so personal vehicles are a necessity. They are also used to commute to Oyster stations, as Staines is not on Oyster (making fares sometimes 4 times more expensive than say Feltham, which is one stop away) and has no easy public transport to tube stations. People also use personal vehicles as a total alternative to public transport, as local trains are unreliable and being reduced.
- 3) The reduction of car ownership is temporary due to COVID, as currently in the local area the wait for a driving test is over a year. So following COVID, car ownership will increase.
- 4) All roads literally lead to electric vehicles. There is no conversation about faster or more local transport or trains, but more personal vehicles.
- 5) As stated by Inland Homes during their opening statement, yes paid parking is already at high demand, so bringing more people and less parking is clearly detrimental. If people have to pay to park at home, they will simply park a 10 minute walk away, which means parking in local residential roads. Negatively impacting existing residence.

... all of this and with no development or investment in public services, infrastructure and public transport.

Therefore, this large scale development in this area is inappropriate for this old medium sized market town, which dates back to the Romans.

16 and 14 story blocks will tower over all in that part of Staines Upon Thames – in fact the taller tower will be the tallest building in the whole of Staines Upon Thames, this is hence the restriction to develop over 6 stories in the vicinity and the local residence and councillor's objections.

Closing Points

I will close with the following ...

- It says a lot that those against this development are largely local residence and councillors and those for are developers who I understand live no where near the site (confirmed from the previous meeting with residence).
 - A resolution and good compromise here would be for Inland Homes to reduce the height to 6 stories. This would mean:
 - Parking would be more proportionate; and
 - Locals would be happier
- ... however, this hasn't happened due to the affect this will have on the profitability of the project.

- As my learned friend for the Council has said, and I fully agree, this is a case of maximisation by the developers. They have planned to the absolute maximum of the 16 stories and for reasons of profit will not compromise.
- Off the back of some points made in the opening statement by my learned friend for Inland Homes, I will finish on these points ...
 - London Square/Berkley Development – when these were quoted as being already in place or being developed in Staines, it must be remembered that
 - These are on the other side of Staines
 - These were approved before residence and councillors appreciated what was happening – “once bitten, twice shy!” The residence are now saying “NO”.
 - This Masonic development will be the tallest in Staines
 - This project will “enhance the overall view” – how can a tower block enhance a view? This is totally delusional and a clear example of a blanket statement being used in a square hole.
 - The project has not been amended by Inland Homes from the initial plans to find any kind of compromise - for example adding more affordable housing or parking would be to their benefit. In fact, this project is in fact less beneficial than first thought, as Inlands Homes have now conceded that they actually have less affordable housing in the development. Another show of Inland Homes’ sheer arrogance.

As such, it is my firm view that this project is an example of inappropriate maximisation by developers, with a project that is entirely out of character for the area and will in fact produce the highest building in Staines in an already crowded area with insufficient parking and public services. This building will simply serve as a long term eyesore and burden on the town and residence. Therefore, I strongly submit that this proposed project will cause overwhelming harm to residence and so this appeal should be rejected.

I welcome any questions (no questions were posed).