

PLANNING APPLICATION PUBLIC COMMENT

Application number: PP/18/05313
Site Address: Heythrop College, 23-24 Kensington Square, LONDON, W8 5HH
Proposal: Reinstatement of three townhouses (Class C3), (part of 23 and 24 Kensington Square); refurbishment of college building (part of 23 Kensington Square) and use as an extra care facility (Class C2). Demolition of all other buildings on site. Erection of deck over adjacent London Underground line and construction of 5 buildings (ranging between 1 and 8 storeys in height) for use as an extra care facility including units, communal facilities and services areas, community hall and on-site affordable housing and associated access parking, servicing and landscaping. (MAJOR DEVELOPMENT)

Comment received: This is to object about this development on three grounds

The size of the project and the impact it will have on the Tube station and the area surrounding it

In order to accommodate the 142 luxury flats, 5 affordable homes, Community Hall and public gardens, the developers will need to create and build on decking over the tube line. Any such development to the Tube line should be considered in the context of a bigger strategy to improve the Station and its access rather than an ad-hoc addition to accommodate more development. There is a possibility that piecemeal and short-sighted changes of convenience like this, rather than a more joined-up strategy, will prevent future development that would benefit commuters and the residential and business community.

The lack of appropriate social and community benefits for local residents

In developing Heythrop, the developer requires 'change of use'. In the words of the RBKC policy on this, any new use must be 'a social and community use which predominantly serves or which provides significant benefits to borough residents and where it is demonstrated that there is greater benefit to the borough resulting from this change of use.'

Superficially this application for retirement homes, nursing care and community centre would appear to fulfil this criteria but the facts indicate otherwise. The 142 'Extra Care' units will comprise 69 x1 bedroom apartments with an average price of £2 million and 73 x 2 bedroom apartment with prices ranging from £4 million to £7.750 million. Rental on other flats will range from £101K p.a. to £193K p.a. Such residences are aimed at ultra high net worth individuals and are beyond the reach of local residents who will actually appreciate and benefit them. Such price levels are inconsistent with the RBKC policy quoted above and will result in yet another 'ghost' development of empty flats either bought as 'security boxes in the sky' by overseas investors, similar to the almost empty One Kensington Gardens, or that will simply fail to sell at all.

The loss to the locality of existing social benefits and social diversity

The demolition of the buildings on the site will mean the loss of accommodation housing 110 students and a Dyslexia Training Centre in one of the houses to be converted back to a residence. The replacement of this with access to the gardens 5 affordable homes and a community hall is merely paying lip service to the requirement for 'a good mix of uses in the area.' And in no way represents a 'greater benefit' that what will be lost.

In summary, while I welcome the prospect of development and opening up of this beautiful site, I would urge the RBKC to ensure that they do not give in to developers wanting to create another enclave for the absent super rich while ignoring the pressing housing and care needs of the borough which the tragedy of Grenfell has highlighted so clearly. The borough, and this particular Ward is a vibrant and diverse one and the development of this site, if done well, is an ideal opportunity to contribute further to this. They current proposals will in no way do this and I ask that they are rejected.

Date of Comment: 05/10/2018 17:52:16

Comment type: Objection