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From: Jenny Linter [REDACTED]
Sent: 09 July 2023 19:42
To: Richmond Local Plan
Subject: Local plan for Teddington

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From:
Jenny and Rod Linter
[REDACTED]

Dear Sir/ Madam,

On my capital Ring walks, I have been both surprised and horrified at the clusters, or zones of tall apartments which have become the vogue for much of London. The Greater London Authority, the Conservative Party and Local Authorities have received much criticism for their lack of investment in housing. It is not, however, just a numbers game, because attention must be paid to the demographics of an area, migratory movements of population, the existing built environment, the changing economy, property prices locally, the local hydrology, the marketing of properties abroad, local vested interests, local services available, and the consequences of land use change. Forgive me if my comments appear naïve – I am new to the whole issue of long term planning, and I can see that you have much to consider.

If the 15year plan is accepted, I understand that it would allow for the introduction of “mid-rise” apartments of 5-6 storeys on the existing Teddington Business Park in Station Road. I am a little confused because in the Council documents, 6 storeys is more correctly identified as “tall” buildings. The term mid-rise would therefore seem to be inappropriate, As such height would dominate and overshadow neighbouring properties.

The physical impact of clusters (more than 3 blocks) or zones of tall buildings is alarming, because such a development would be at odds with the existing built environment. Within and close by Station Road Business Park are Listed buildings, buildings with Townscape merit and Conservation Areas (the converted Christ Church – now 6 luxury apartments, the Clarence Hotel, Teddington Railway Station, numerous buildings in Teddington High Street, Albert Rd, Victoria Road, Elmfield House and the Teddington Cheese Shop). These are all within eye-line of the current business Park and would be significantly over-shadowed by a zone of tall apartments. Furthermore, the neighbouring roads are predominantly 2 storey Victorian and Edwardian dwellings. A cluster of modern tall apartment blocks would be out of place with the existing suburban residential properties, completely overshadowing them. If it’s not too rude, I would suggest that Informer House is out of place and should never have been allowed. A concentration of more tall buildings would be very intrusive, and in addition to the eyesores proposed, a cluster would literally divide Teddington in two.

Then there’s the issue of exorbitant property prices in Teddington. The cost of Semi-detached properties in LBRT have risen 25% since 2018 to an average of £1.3 million. Terraced properties have escalated 25% to £870k on average. Flats have risen 9% to £500k, on average. Reality shows that prices have made it impossible for people in the 20’s, 30s and 40s to afford to buy homes in Teddington. Outsiders can not afford to move in and young adults who grew up here are forced to move away. This is clearly reflected in the population pyramids for Teddington in 2001, 2011 and 2021, which show clear indentations for those age groups. The % of population in those age groups who can not afford to buy family homes is significantly higher than for London as a whole. As a result, Teddington’s population has grown just 0.22% since 2011. Surely it is better to focus on providing and maintaining local employment, in order to help retain young working adults, and to discourage them from moving further out of London. The Business Park is well designed, offering space for both offices and storage and is a asset to the town.

There is no reason why more flexible use could be made of this purpose built Park. Affordable family homes, in keeping with the existing built environment are needed.

Please could you explain if there are any controls over the type of dwellings that would be allowed. Who would the new apartment blocks be aimed at and would they satisfy local needs? Recent developments seem to discriminate against young people, families and those requiring support in the form of social housing. The apartments in the former Christ Church in Station road sold for £1.7million each. I understand that some of these are Buy to Let. The luxury Teddington Riverside Development, built 5 years ago, contains 217 apartments, ranging in price from £620,000 for a 1 bed to £1,840,000 for a 3-bed. A whole block, called Haymarket House, with 47 apartments stands empty. It comes as no surprise that 52% are unsold, and that buyers are either wealthy singles/ couples or retirees. Families are not catered for- it's as simple as that. City Developments Ltd, responsible for the Riverside Apartments, is based in Singapore, and certainly doesn't help satisfy local needs. Some of the apartments that have been sold are actually Buy to Let, and have been purchased for investment, in many cases by people based abroad. Savills actively market luxury apartments in Hong Kong, Singapore and other far distant shores. I therefore request again that instead of luxury apartments, consideration is given to young families, as they have been priced out of the market. This will have a knock-on effect on school numbers in the future, and you will be aware that some schools in central London (Southwark) face closure because of falling numbers. With respect to new developments, it should never be a numbers game in response to " more housing is needed, " rather an attempt to provide a balanced supply to mixed housing needs. Forgive me if I have misunderstood the point of feedback, but to me these seem to be critically important.

If planning permission is given for a whole zone of tall apartment buildings, does that mean demolition of the existing buildings on the business park? As I understand it, the construction industry is currently being watched very carefully, because demolition and rebuilding accounts for unacceptable carbon emissions, as it necessitates the manufacture of 2 lots of construction materials. This would not look good for Richmond Borough, given that we are experiencing a climate crisis. Additionally, if the existing buildings were demolished, yet more landfill would be created. It makes no sense.

I am concerned about the increased potential demand for water from a significant increase in housing, and the capacity of sewers to cope with a large local increase in population. I am also concerned about increased traffic on our roads, both during demolition and construction, but also once the development is finished. Already, Broad street and the High Street are blighted by buses linking Heathrow, Twickenham, Richmond, Kew, Kingston, Tolworth, Hampton, Hampton Court and Hampton Wick. We never seem free of them, and half the time they are empty, which seems bizarre when air quality, public health and climate crisis are high on people's agendas.

In summary, I don't feel that clustering of tall apartments in outer boroughs is the answer to providing housing for growing populations. It favours the wealthy, creates environmental challenges in its wake, and is at odds with Victorian and Edwardian suburban residential areas and historic town centres like Teddington.

Thank you for all that you do to look after the borough, but please give due consideration to the points that I've made,

With Kind Regards,

Jenny and Rod Linter

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