

Royal Hospital Ward Councillors Objection

We write as the local ward councillors for this wonderful part of Chelsea to formally raise our objections to the above-referenced planning application. We have listened carefully to the concerns of residents and stakeholders and set out below the principal grounds on which we believe the submission is unacceptable in its current form.

We take our role of custodians of Chelsea very seriously and when applications come forward, we must have due regard to the legacy they will leave in our area. Tite Street is one such street which requires special attention – being home to artists, writers and dramatists for well over 100 years.

Whilst we fully support the removal of the St. Wilfrid's concrete structure and view it as a blight on the Chelsea landscape, we must be equally certain that its replacement improves the area as much as the current building harms it. This is not an unreasonable ask and we believe the landholder must approach this site from the same principles.

Whilst design is subjective there are adopted planning policy considerations we must judge the scheme upon, and we believe it fails in 4 key areas.

Scale, Massing and Height:

The Local Plan we recently adopted clearly stipulates that new build heights in this area should not exceed 21m and that this development should respect the character of the surrounding townscape. In our view this proposal breaches this threshold and does not go far enough in improving the townscape to offset this policy breach.

Townscape Gap:

A long-standing and well appreciated townscape gap along Tite Street has been preserved for over 50 years and has indeed been included in the Royal Hospital Conservation area appraisal. This proposal builds over a noticeable portion of the gap and therefore creates a marked loss of daylight and sky view for the homes opposite. This development therefore goes against the conservation area appraisal and this transgression must be viewed as a material consideration by officers when resolving to make a recommendation.

Design and Heritage:

As we've said, design is indeed subjective, but there is a clear vernacular along Tite Street which ought to be considered in any proposal for this site. Whilst we recognise the developers' continued improvements to their scheme throughout the process, we must have due regard to the unique historic context of Tite Street and the impact of the views on the Grade 1 listed Royal Hospital. Therefore, we believe that this site calls for the utmost in design excellence and do not believe the developer has gone far enough in meeting these ambitions or in creating a scheme which can blend in with its neighbours.

Affordable Housing:

As a borough with an ageing population the loss of a care home is deeply regrettable, and it is therefore disappointing that this application has no provision for care within it. As the applicant is seeking a change of use it is on them to overcome the very high policy bar. As the current proposal fails to deliver onsite affordable housing nor indeed is an alternative in-borough offer made this bar has not been met.

In summary – whilst we fully welcome development in RBKC and wish to see sensitive new homes being brought forward the current proposal does not just fail to meet the policy tests we've outlined it also fails to deliver a net-benefit to the area and to the Borough.

We hope the developer will listen and amend their scheme to take account of the reasonable and justified concerns of ourselves and our residents.

All the very best,

Elizabeth Campbell,
Cem Kemahli,
Emma Will