

Community Involvement through Campion Concerns

Statement by Campion Concerns, July 21st 2006

The residents group Campion Concerns was formed by residents meeting to discuss their mutual concerns over what they felt had been a sham consultation organised by Green Issues Communications. The purpose of the 'consultation' was supposedly to involve residents in drawing up Try Homes' proposals for the development of the Campion House site. When residents talked to each other they found that (a) none of them believed that the consultation was genuine, and (b) they were all very concerned about the scale of the proposed development.

None of those initially involved was an expert in planning matters but they very soon appreciated that an appraisal of the developers' proposals would be most effective if it was done in planning terms rather than in terms of individual/subjective preferences. Then began a period of coming to terms with the relevant planning documents from the **Hounslow UDP**, through the **London Plan** to the **PPGs** and **PPSs** of the **DCLG** (ex-**ODPM**).

Our continual experience has been that when we tried to discuss a point with Try Homes they would seek to justify their position with a reference to a planning document, then when we read the document we found that it did not provide the justification they claimed. We would then reply on the basis of the knowledge gained only to find that when our questions became sufficiently pointed and well-informed Try Homes would simply stop replying.

We produced Newsletters (four at the time of writing) to keep residents informed. In fact after some initial discussion about tactics we decided that ours would be an information-led campaign. We have therefore encouraged as many people as possible to read the appropriate source documents for each issue. Because of that we have developed a well-informed team and, we believe, have earned the respect of the overwhelming majority of residents in the catchment area for the Campion site and well beyond. This has been demonstrated by appreciation for our efforts shown in many different ways (letters, personal contact, financial contributions).

When we knew that Try Homes' long-promised application was imminent we discussed the possibility of running a petition either before or after the application. We already had a good idea about the main features of the development from correspondence between the Try Homes and Campion Concerns and also with other residents who showed us the letters they had received from Try Homes.

We decided on a pre-application petition because we wanted to remove any justification for the developer's claim of residential support for their proposals before the application was made. As it turned out all the items in the petition remain apposite now that we have the application. The petition expressed the residents' view that (1) the development should be sensitive to the character of the local area, (2) only 1.17 hectares on the site is available for built development, (3) there should be no encroachment on designated local open space, (4) no genuine consultation with residents has taken place, and finally (5) no development should take place with out a full study of the impact on traffic and local services.

In our view ALL these points remain entirely relevant now that we have Try Homes' application to develop the Campion site.

We gave residents the text of the petition (next page) weeks before taking it to them. If any resident said they were not clear about what we were saying we gave them the text of the petition and said we would call back in a few days. In other words we only wanted people to sign the petition as a free decision with something which they agreed with.

We took the petition round over a period of two weeks. We managed to speak to residents in almost 500 homes in the catchment area (the majority). The response was one of nearly total support for our arguments. Of the homes where doors were opened over 95% willingly signed the petition. A tiny handful of people said things like “I don't want to get involved” or “I might like to buy a flat in the development if they are cheap”.

The support for the petition was nearly total from the large number of residents that we managed to speak to. 473 residents signed the petition which was sent to Try Homes and the Planning Department.

We never received an acknowledgement or a reply from Try Homes to our petition. Over 30 residents wrote independently to Try Homes to ask for a response. None of them had an answer to their communications.

One can understand why Try Homes was so quiet about the petition. The Try Homes' claim of residential support had been based on 75 forms returned by residents at during the 'consultation' organised by Green Issues Communications (dealt with in our comments on the Statement of Community Involvement by Green Issues).

Our petition made it absolutely clear that whatever justification there might be for the Try Homes proposals that did not include residential support. The wording of the petition makes it clear that the residents' objections made before the application continued to be relevant after the application had been made. **We therefore request that the Planning Department and members of the Planning Committee consider this petition as evidence of residents' views of the Try Homes proposals.**

Wording of the petition

Petition to Try Homes on the Champion House Development

We, the local residents, are concerned over a number of issues in relation to development proposals for the Champion House site, Thornbury Road, Isleworth. In summary:

- 1 *We want a development **THAT IS SENSITIVE** to the **character of the local area** and its **conservation status** i.e. one that will preserve and enhance the Spring Grove conservation area, in particular due consideration to heights, densities and distances from boundaries.*
- 2 *We believe **the land available for built development is 1.17 hectares** and **NOT** the total site area of 3.26 hectares. Planning guidelines recommend 30–80 units/hectare for a site of this nature. This means that the upper limit for this development should be 95 units. The density of the surrounding built development is 33 units/hectare. **The density of the development should respect this historical character of the area by not departing from this significantly.***
- 3 *The **OPEN SPACE** (2.07 hectares) on this site is protected and there should be **NO ENCROACHMENT**. (Champion House is situated in an area noted as having a deficiency of access to local open space, and in line with planning guidelines **at all levels**, there should be no encroachment.)*
- 4 *We do not believe that a genuine consultaion has yet taken place. We want a **PROPER** public consultation, in particular on the future use of the open space on the site and public access to it. We also want to be consulted about the proposed buildings in the light of all the relevant facts.*
- 5 ***We want no development to be approved without a prior study of the IMPACT on traffic flow, parking problems, and infrastructure and services** (schools, doctors, public transport etc). This study should take into account all recent and projected developments in the area (e.g. Brunel: 366 units, London Road: 190 underway, 170 approved units)*