

Chair: Christine Thornton, 40 Cross Flatts Avenue, Beeston, Leeds, LS11 7BG. Tel 0113 270 0875

Secretary: Mr Robert Winfield, 7 Allenby Gardens, Beeston, Leeds, LS11 5RW. Tel 0777 379 7820

E mail robert.winfield1@ntlworld.com Forum Website- www.beestonforum.btck.co.uk

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BEESTON COMMUNITY FORUM

Leeds City Council Development Department

12th July 2015

By e mail

Dear Sirs

PLANNING APPLICATION REFERENCE 14/06007/FU- PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT OF FORMER ICE PACKING FACTORY AT 49 BARKLY ROAD, LEEDS, LS11 7EW

Following the recent resubmission of a number of documents relating to the above mentioned planning application by the applicant; Aspiring Communities, we are taking this opportunity to make a further objection to the application.

The photographs included with the Design and Access Statement posted on the Public Access portal on 18th May 2015 are of an exceptionally poor quality, to the extent that they are rendered useless. Additionally, the statement claims that the site is located five miles from Leeds City Centre, even though the actual distance of the site from Leeds City Centre is less than three miles. As the statement contains such a fundamental inaccuracy, how can other assertions made in the statement be relied upon? The applicant also states (page 12 of the document) that 'many of the comments that have been voiced by the local community especially since the planning resubmission have been taken on board as part of the new design of the building. However, in our judgement, the applicant has made only cosmetic changes to the design of the building and does not appear to have presented evidence that most of the concerns raised have been addressed in any way; for example, a request from Flood Risk Management has not been addressed . Some indication of the lack of community consultation can be found from the fact that Lisa Leonard , the Head Teacher of St Anthony's Primary School stated in her letter of objection (posted on Public Access on 26th December 2014) that the applicant had not approached her about the possible use, by the school of the facilities which would be provided by the development, which is virtually adjacent to the school.

Our letter of 1st December 2014 raises a number of fundamental concerns about the plans. In our original letter, we expressed the view that the development would increase traffic in the area and significantly increase the probability of death and injury being caused to Primary School pupils going to and from St Anthony's Primary School, which is located very close to the site , and Hugh Gaitskell Primary School, which is located around 500 metres from the site. The new documents from the applicant have done nothing to allay these substantial concerns . Nor does the applicant appear to have done anything to address the increase in pollution which would be likely to be caused by the development .

Our original letter raises a number of concerns about the underground car park proposed by the applicant, and suggested that steps need to be taken to ensure that the structural soundness of adjacent buildings

will not be undermined .No steps appear to have been taken to provide a reassurance about these issues .Additionally, the applicant seems to have taken no steps to allay the fears of residents in relation to the possible increase in on street car parking (if visitors to the proposed development decline to use the underground car park) , or the congestion caused by vehicles entering or leaving the underground car park (if this is used by visitors to the building) .

Although the applicant has stated that the facilities will be for the local community, they have not demonstrated local need or demand. Indeed considering the hostility of sections of the local community to the proposed development (as clearly demonstrated by the number of local objections to it), it is difficult to believe that the development would be used extensively by the local community. There has also been a lack of clarity about the number of people who would use the development, whether users of the development would be local people, or whether they would be travelling from further afield (which would only compound the problems of congestion and pollution referred to above). Although it is stated that the Islamic Learning Centre will attract 250 people for Friday Prayers , I understand that it is envisaged that the Sports Hall will be closed during Friday Prayers. This has led to suspicions that the wives and children of those attending the Islamic Learning Centre for prayers would meet in the Sports Hall whilst prayers are taking place. It is therefore difficult to accept the applicant's assertions about the maximum patronage at the development. Critically, the Leeds City Council Highways Department has said, in a comment posted on Public Access that ***‘ I have reviewed the revised drawings submitted by the applicant and uploaded on 18 May 2015. I have no further highway comments on the layout changes which are relatively minor internal amendments. My concerns about the ability to restrict prayer room attendance to 250 people and the associated problems regarding highway safety and capacity remain. There has been no additional information submitted on this issue.***

Moreover, Aspiring Communities recently held a large scale event , reported on the South Leeds Life website; www.southleedslife.com with an attendance of around 600 people. How can we be certain that the applicant would not seek to hold such events at the proposed development, with inevitable consequences for congestion and pollution? There is also the possibility that the new Asda store on Old Lane , and a new traffic crossing on Old Lane , might have an additional impact on congestion in the area around Barkly Road. Additionally, there have been suggestions that the actual purpose of the building would be to serve as the National Headquarters for a branch of Islam. In our opinion, it is not unreasonable to expect the applicant to provide a detailed rebuttal of these claims and also give the local residents the confidence that the development would indeed be multi faith, as the applicant claims. We would wholeheartedly applaud efforts to bring people from different communities together, but we believe that the applicant's actions since they submitted their first planning application for this site have not had this effect, and have indeed alienated many local residents.

We also feel that the applicant needs to give assurances that if planning permission is granted , they have the necessary financial resources to complete the development . In the absence of such assurances, there will surely be a risk that the development will be left half completed , or that the building of the development will take longer to build as a result of the need to raise funds whilst the development is being constructed. These concerns are particularly relevant in view of the fact that the recent construction of a new Asda store on Old Lane, within walking distance of the proposed development, has given rise to substantial concerns on the part of local residents.

In view of the generous extension of time given by Leeds City Council to the applicants, and their failure to address a number of key issues as explained above, we feel that Leeds City Council has every justification in rejecting the application on the grounds of lack of information. The minor alterations to the plans do nothing to alter our view that the infrastructure of the area will not sustain a development of the size envisaged .We look forward to the planning application being rejected.

Yours faithfully

ROBERT J.W WINFIELD

