



3 Walnut Close
Epsom
Surrey
KT18 5JL

14th August 2007

Borough Planning Officer
Town Hall
The Parade
Epsom
KT18 5BY

The Lintons Centre – Planning Application No. 07/00379/FUL

Dear Sir

I am writing to express the concerns of residents about the proposed development of part of the Lintons Lane building for student accommodation purposes. Epsom and Ewell Liberal Democrats organised a public meeting on 2nd August 2007 at the Phoenix Club, attended by over fifty local people, at which a number of salient points were made that we agreed at the meeting to send to you. We request that this letter be placed before members of the Planning Committee ahead of their consideration of this planning application.

It was apparent at the meeting that the streets close to the application site – Lintons Lane, Stones Road, Leith Road, Victoria Place and Middle Lane - are ones where there are already a number of public order and nuisance issues which are likely to be significantly exacerbated if permission were to be given for 115 students to occupy part of the Lintons Lane building. In the words of one contributor – “this is an area that has reached saturation point.” Existing issues raised by residents included anti-social behaviour - litter and graffiti – and vandalism associated with customers leaving public houses in East Street particularly late at night, traffic congestion specifically associated with delivery lorries, refuse collection vehicles, and vans associated with a local firm, and “commuter” parking problems on most of the roads close to the Lintons Lane site.

There was considerable scepticism that the “travel plan” proposed by the applicants would, in practice, be either effective or indeed enforceable. It was anticipated that there would be significant volumes of vehicular traffic associated with the students themselves, their visitors, and those providing goods and services to the student accommodation. As one contributor stated “Our ongoing parking and congestion problems will be extended into the evenings and over the weekends.” There was recognition on the part of a number of people that the proposals would improve the visual appearance of the Lintons Lane site. Some concerns were expressed about disturbance and disruption during the construction period.

Worries were expressed that student lifestyles would, in all likelihood, lead to some increase in anti-social behaviour, particularly as late night parties were anticipated to be part of student life. A number of nearby homes have short gardens and the houses are located very close to the application site. As one contributor said, “Students are by their nature transient and have no on-going commitment to their local community.” A particular concern was that there was no indication in the application documents as to how student behaviour would be regulated and controlled either by the developer or by the institution of higher education to which the students would belong.

Indeed the absence of any apparent contractual link between the developer and either of the Borough’s two main further education institutions – NESCOL and the University for the Creative Arts – was of particular concern. “Who do we approach if the student’s behaviour is unacceptable?” and “Will there be a warden?” were questions raised by a number of contributors. (It is our understanding that the University for the Creative Arts has very recently stated that it has no involvement in this planning application, although it recognises the overall need for additional student accommodation in the Borough.) By contrast, residents explained that the Youth Club that currently operates in part of the Lintons Lane building is well managed and there is always someone who one can talk to if there are any issues associated with the Club.

Another source of concern was the fear that, although this application is specifically for the provision of student accommodation, there might be later proposals for other uses which, once the precedent of institutional residential accommodation has been established, might be even less acceptable than student flats. The consensus of the meeting was that provision of accommodation for the elderly at the Linton Lane site would be just about the only acceptable residential land use at this location.

At the end of the meeting, those attending were asked if they supported or opposed the application as it currently stands. There were no hands raised in support.

Please note that my role as chairman of the public meeting was to summarise the views of those attending. The views and opinions presented in this letter should not be attributed to Epsom and Ewell Borough Councillors of the Liberal Democrat Party.

Yours faithfully

Timothy Murphy

Chair, Epsom and Ewell Liberal Democrats