

Comment on a planning application

Application Details

Application: 15/5376/FUL

Address: Sandycombe Centre 1 - 9 Sandycombe Road Richmond

Proposal: Redevelopment of site to provide for a mixed use development of 535m² of commercial space and 20 residential units, together with car parking and landscaping.

Comments Made By

Name:

Organisation: The Kew Society

Address: 32 Alexandra Road, Kew, Richmond, TW9 2BS

Comments

Type of comment: Object to the proposal

Comment: This development will replace a building which is a poor architectural fit with the surrounding area. Apart from the merit of being relatively low rise, it will not otherwise be missed by local residents in design terms. We had a helpful meeting with the developers and recognise they have modified their plans in response to local concerns. But we believe the plans could be further modified and on this basis we are objecting to the application. Comparisons are made with the heights of buildings on the other side of the A316. We believe it is the heights of buildings along Sandycombe, Raleigh and Windham Roads which are of primary relevance. From these vantage points there will be significant changes due to the overall heights and massing proposed. The Council's Site Allocation Plan requires mixed use of this site including office space. Ceiling heights for office space are approximately 1 metre higher than for living accommodation. This has the effect of increasing the overall building height by 1 metre. We support the Council's policy on retaining office space. But removal of the mixed use requirement may be a trade-off worth considering here. If developed as residential, the building height could reduce, an improved financial viability could result and key worker accommodation could be secured. We appreciate that the Council can only consider this application in its own terms. But we urge them to explore with the EFA the return of the nearby London House to office space. Our measurements at the London House site show clear exceedances against air quality standards, making the site unfit for school use. Refurbishment for office space might allow for re-provision of the office space proposed at the Sandycombe Centre. Another option would be to lower building heights through fewer units. This possibility will depend on the viability assessment. We asked the developer for their viability assessment and the Council's assessment of their case. The

developer's initial response is that although they might release part of this information, the full assessment is commercially confidential. We would however need to see the full assessment to judge the feasibility of a smaller number of units at this site, the reasons why no affordable housing is included, and the justification for the amount of CIL. Richmond Council's approach to its current review of its Local Plan includes the proposal that communities should in future have access to these assessments. This case offers an opportunity to do so. The Transport Assessment allocates 15 parking spaces, rather than the guideline 24, because of the availability of public transport, car sharing and on-street parking. This does not appear to take account of the more recent loss of 3 parking spaces along Sandycombe Road as a result of the, welcome, traffic calming measures. We are not convinced the provision is sufficient. Fewer accommodation or office units in the scheme would help. We welcome the proposals to improve the boundary treatment of the site along Sandycombe Road with new planting and some permeability of sight lines from the pavement. We raised the need to ensure that fencing along the rail track side of the development, facing North Road, does not become a canvas for graffiti. This has been a problem along the rail track between Kew and Richmond in recent months, including on the current building, despite the Network Rail palisade security fencing. Landscaping between the boundary fence and the Network Rail fencing should help. This should be a requirement of the scheme approval, with careful thought given to the type of planting to minimise opportunities for graffiti. Conditions on providing samples of the proposed finishes will be important. Conditions should also be imposed on signage related to any office use so that it is unobtrusive, consistent amongst all occupiers, and not illuminated.