

Argles James

From: Planning Support
Subject: FW: Comment Received from Public Access

Application Reference No. : HGY/2018/0739
Site Address: Teachers Centre 336 Philip Lane London N15 4AB
Comments by: R. Smith
From:

Lawrence Rd

Submission: Not Object

Comments: I feel compelled to offer cautious support for this application if only because of a fairly organised (and no doubt well-intended) social media campaign objecting to the scheme. Various grounds for objection seem to me to be based on suspicion and cynicism which I feel are unfair. As an architect I see a scheme which apparently exceeds the minimum standards for dwelling sizes (and certainly not the 2bedsits which some are objecting to); shamefully not the case in most developments. Of course it would be preferable if this building were to remain a community resource and educational establishment if possible, but I am sympathetic to a Council whose budget is restricted and to the needs of conserving the fabric of a building which is currently an at-risk liability. It seems anyway that the building is owned by a Charitable Trust, not the Council as some objectors seem to imply, and therefore not even in the Council's control.

Further, I am surprised that any planning decision might be led by unfounded suspicions of the motivations of potential occupiers. Are we really as a society going to keep our children locked away and out of view simply because of a small minority of perverted people?! It is not like the children are being required to walk alone through darkened streets. This is a school where children are surrounded by professional carers and presumably collected at the gates by responsible parents; there must be few safer places. I don't wish to live in a society hamstrung by fear, over-protection and cynicism and there is no guidance that I know of that writes such unease into planning policy.

This appears to be a reasonable scheme, offering decent and necessary new housing, close to residential amenities (and education) and includes the safeguarding of the fabric of a cultural asset. Such densification is positive in terms of transport infrastructure and for local business (in other words it is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable). Whether or not the Council see fit to allow a Charitable Trust to cash-in on its own portfolio asset (with funding therefore spent on educational projects elsewhere) and whether or not it is appropriate for this building to be occupied by what will inevitably be relatively affluent individuals - in view of the desperate shortage of support and housing for the less well off - must be based on the Council's own assessment and a broad view of provision and planning across the borough.

I feel there are more important battles to fight when it comes to unscrupulous developers and landlords (e.g. unregulated subdivision of much needed family housing), poorly designed schemes (e.g. Wards Corner) and funding for Council-run infrastructure, which must surely be blamed on an appalling Government austerity ideology. If no other option is viable for this building in the medium term then I would support the current scheme as long as suitable conditions are placed on the provision of good landscaping and build quality. We may have to wait a long time for a better proposal and this seems to be a reasonably considered and comprehensive application, with the rare involvement of an architect too, which

should be applauded (although of course I'm biased on that front). I will not be wilding pitch fork if the Council see fit to approve this application.