



OWGRA

Osterley & Wyke Green Residents' Association

13 March 2020

Mr Duncan Matthews,
Land and Development Director
Berkeley St Edward
Chelsea Bridge Wharf
380 Queenstown Road
London
SW11 8PE

Dear Duncan

TESCO & HOMEBASE SITES IN OSTERLEY, WEST LONDON, OWGRA WISH LIST

[This is an update of a letter dated 7 Feb 2020 with an addition (in bold) at item 7.5.]

I am writing to you on behalf of the Osterley and Wyke Green Residents' Association (OWGRA) and our Tesco/Homebase Residents' Action Group now that we have been able to consider and articulate our views arising from the recent Berkeley St Edward-organised community liaison workshops and walkabouts with local residents. We have been impressed by the efforts made to engage with local people. What follows is an amalgam of views of what we would like to see at both the Tesco and Homebase sites in Osterley plus a number of concerns and we hope you will feel able to take on board as much as possible. Time is of the essence as we know your aim is to formally submit a detailed planning application for the Homebase site and an outline application for the Tesco site quite soon.

1. CONTEXT

- 1.1. Enhance the surroundings by acknowledging and accepting that the immediate area is mainly 2 and some 3 storey houses and flats to the west and north, many traditional 1930s buildings with some 1960s-1980s including a purpose-built housing developments at the Wyke Estate; added to that are substantial adjacent sports facilities at Goals Soccer, Wyke Green Golf Club and Grass-hoppers Rugby Club plus the Nishkam School and soon-to-be completed Bolder Academy, all accessed from Syon Lane.
- 1.2. To the east and south are the beginnings of Brentford's 'Golden Mile' on the A4 with commercial and industrial buildings including the major communications and entertainment development at Sky plus the listed Gillette building (currently unoccupied but used from time to time as a film set).
- 1.3. Travelling eastwards along the A4, the land lowers in height towards the railway and canal and down towards Chiswick roundabout such that most of the existing taller developments do not have too detrimental an impact on our immediate area though the density of the taller buildings coupled with the M4 flyover to the east lead to a sense of enclosure.
- 1.4. The locations of the proposed developments are not near a town centre and are poorly served by public transport (for both the PTAL is 2 and, according to TfL this will remain the case for the foreseeable future).

2. HEIGHT OF BUILDINGS

- 2.1. OWGRA believe the proposed housing developments at the Homebase and Tesco sites should reflect the character of the existing 2 and 3 storey housing to the west and north as well as the modest Brentford Trees Estate to the immediate south of the Homebase site.
- 2.2. While there might be some scope for taller buildings well set back from the residential streets towards the Sky complex, there should be a maximum height of 4 or 5 storeys with 2 to 3 storeys facing existing homes. The designs and heights at both sites must be subservient and complement the listed Gillette building. The London Plan suggests that high rise buildings (buildings above 20 m according to the Local Plan) are appropriate near to town centres served well by public transport. Neither condition applies to the developments in question.
- 2.3. Given the height of land at the Gillette site and northwards including the existing residential, educational and sports usage, care should be taken over heights of new buildings so that they do not dominate the area nor produce an unacceptable longer view from areas at a lower height, such as Kew Gardens, the Thames, especially within the Isleworth Conservation Area and Syon Park.
- 2.4. Even though the Sky and GSK buildings to the east are set on lower ground than the high ridge which starts at the Gillette building, they can be seen above the tree-line in Osterley Park, contrary to the provisions of the Osterley Park Conservation Area. OWGRA do not want more tall buildings to dominate the skyline in this way.
- 2.5. We need to avoid the harmful impact of high-rise buildings on quality of life of existing residents, e.g. overshadowing, loss of daylight and sunlight.
- 2.6. High rise buildings have other significant environmental impacts on the surrounding area. For example, environmental winds generated by a high-rise building can cause severe discomfort to pedestrians, unless their effect is identified and mitigated. Wind tunnel tests should be conducted to identify and mitigate the effect of environmental winds.

3. IDENTITY AND BUILT FORM

- 3.1. There should be a coherent pattern of development which is attractive and distinctive. OWGRA believe that the residential development should apply the spirit of the 'Building Better, Building Beautiful' report just published as well as the 2019 National Design Guide. For instance, the residential development should include identifiable front doors plus private gardens and balconies to provide future residents with a sense of space, security and privacy.
- 3.2. The texture of buildings, their proportions and the spaces between them are all-important as is how people interact and having most of the things you need within walking distance. With only 4.6ha at the Tesco site and 1.8ha at Homebase, the mass and design are crucial. However, in the course of discussions with the community in the past several weeks and visits to other Berkeley Homes developments, OWGRA is optimistic that a good design, attractive to our residents, could come from the Berkeley St Edward group.

4. STYLE & SIZE OF HOMES

- 4.1. OWGRA want to see plans that fit in harmoniously with the existing homes and street patterns. There is a variety of styles in the existing domestic buildings so we hope the designers and architects will propose something that echoes this or is complementary to it e.g. brickwork and windows at the Homebase site similar to those at the Gillette building opposite and at a similar height so as to complement rather than dominate; reflecting our tree-lined streets with more of the same, our almost private yet public footpaths through them – scope to enhance the 'water garden' between Grant Way and MacFarlane Lane - and similar designs to our (mostly) neat and green front gardens and easily-identified front doors along Syon Lane and in Oaklands Avenue.
- 4.2. There is scope for a variety of building materials, styles of e.g. balconies and rooflines to make local residents enthusiastic, rather than dismayed.
- 4.3. Osterley has a long tradition of being a community and our residents' association is thriving. A recent local development by partners of Berkeley Homes along Thornbury Road, at Marbaix Gardens and Champion House is a good example of attractive new family housing, with its publicly accessible open land, play areas, wild grassland, formal gardens and mature trees. The Wyke Estate

is a 1980s example of good development too, with an open 'square', greenery, play space and sculpture. Both these areas have generated keen interest in maintaining a good community spirit along with the older parts of Osterley, plus many people are active within the existing local sports and social activities. The properties also sell well!

- 4.4. The predominant need is for family-sized homes (defined in the London Plan as homes with 3 or more bedrooms), rather than studio, 1 or 2-bedroom flats.
- 4.5. The space standards set by the London Plan are widely recognised as inadequate and even the London Mayor asks developers to exceed them.
- 4.6. Avoid 'shrinking homes' - minimum requirement for e.g. 2-bed is 50sqm, and the aim should be more like 80sqm.

5. MOVEMENT

- 5.1. Accessible and easy to move around: there are several 'natural' pathways in our area, e.g. through the shrubbery surrounding the Homebase building between the A4 and Syon Lane towards the station, short-cuts diagonally between footways along Grant Way towards the Tesco carpark that local people have created through wear and tear as there is no footway directly from A to B.
- 5.2. OWGRA want to see more thought in the design of new buildings and their surroundings and how people will want to use them, e.g. access doors to shops and services should be clearly visible and the footways lead directly to them. Paths should be wide enough for family groups, buggies and wheelchairs. Cyclists should feel confident and safe on the road.
- 5.3. The footway alongside Homebase site requires widening to accommodate pedestrians.

6. NATURE

- 6.1. Enhanced and optimised: Osterley has much greenery and is suburban in feel as well as density. Until development in the 1920s-30s the south-facing slopes down towards Isleworth and the Thames were full of fruit trees. Some gardens still have them. Opportunities must be taken to enhance and improve that by new planting of shrubs and trees within new private and public garden space. Green walls and roofs should be explored. A communal garden or allotment for growing produce would provide a step towards good community involvement.

7. PUBLIC SPACES AND USES

- 7.1. Safe, social and inclusive: small pedestrian areas for play and relaxation (picnics) with greenery and seating can be created within groups of buildings, plus possibly a central area with small community facilities, shops, cafes and a community hall for people to congregate with events organised.
- 7.2. Changes in height both within and outside the development could provide interest and activities, e.g. a 'climbing hill'.
- 7.3. A pub might be considered as another place for local people including those from outside the immediate development, these suggestions come from the recent Berkeley St Edward community liaison workshops.
- 7.4. Public space and use would have to be funded by residents and managed carefully in the long-term, to ensure the community is not overwhelmed by anti-social behaviour and 'low-level' crime, currently a problem being tackled by our Safer Neighbourhood Police Team. At present, local people use the few pubs in the area plus bars attached to the many existing sports facilities where relaxation and safety are more likely to be guaranteed.
- 7.5. **Space and activities need to be provided for the whole range of ages, from play areas for the under 5s and separate play areas for older children; a youth club for teenagers to provide a wide variety of interesting activities to prevent them from falling in with the wrong crowd, gang, drug and knife culture; and a social club for the elderly who are often very isolated and cut off from the community and have nowhere to go.**

8. AMENITY SPACE

- 8.1. Balcony space, useful as it can be, should not be classed as outdoor space.
- 8.2. Traffic noise and other pollution close to the Homebase site make it unsuitable for roadside balconies.
- 8.3. Amenity space should also keep a public aspect. If each home has its “amenity space” without public provision then this diminishes a sense of community where people meet.

9. FUNCTIONALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF BUILDINGS

- 9.1. Functional, healthy and sustainable: space between buildings is all-important to ensure adequate natural daylight and sunlight; larger windows bring in light but also have the potential for lack of privacy so need to be carefully designed; there should be buffer zones between public pathways and building entrances.
- 9.2. OWGRA represents local residents, and is therefore entitled (and in fact encouraged by the new Planning document) to ask the Developer for details of his sustainability strategy, including its implementation. This is crucial for this site, given its size, complexity and its impact on the surrounding buildings and residents. The Developer’s strategy is expected to be comprehensive and tailor-made to this site. It should be feasible, realistic and verifiable, rather than aspirational.
- 9.3. In the interests of controlling climate change, it is essential to move away from steel and concrete in construction, therefore limiting height.
- 9.4. We have substantial concerns about the building materials to be used bearing in mind the Council’s declaration of a climate emergency (along with most London Councils and the GLA). There has been much discussion in recent times of the destructive impact of concrete and the possibility of alternative materials. We would like to know the developer’s views of this and allied environmental issues.
- 9.5. We need information about insulation standards and the use of solar panels and other sources of renewable energy.

10. RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE

- 10.1. Efficient and resilient: we would like to see recent improvements in energy efficiency utilised in construction techniques as well as day-to-day usage by future residents.
- 10.2. Both Brentford and Osterley experience a low level of publicly-run facilities including health care, libraries, swimming pools and parks; we need developments which will include these facilities in some form or other.
- 10.3. All elements of the local infrastructure (e.g. roads, public transport & utilities) must be capable of supporting such a substantial development. These are already currently at the limit of their capacities. It is crucial to have a mechanism in place to ensure that adequate and realistic provisions are made and thoroughly enforced.

11. LIFESPAN

- 11.1. Made to last: we know prefabricated buildings have a much longer lifespan nowadays and have seen good examples on trips to other Berkeley Homes developments.
- 11.2. Inbuilt designs to allow for extensions or expansion for e.g. multi-generational living would be on our wish-list too.
- 11.3. The standard commitment to 25 years durability will no longer do in an age of the extreme environmental problems we face. Buildings must be built to last for more than one generation. Much of the surrounding housing has been in place for far longer than 25 years. It is reasonable to expect that the durability of the proposed buildings will at least match this. Environmental calculation should take this into account in considering not only the environmental running costs of the developments but also the environmental costs of their construction.

12. TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT

- 12.1. TfL have indicated that the traffic is currently at peak level and we hope they have proposals to improve the congested Gillette Corner junction to cope, especially with additional flows created by new developments.
- 12.2. A major concern is the generation of extra traffic accessing the new Tesco Store at Homebase and how that will be managed in a timely and safe fashion.
- 12.3. The PTAL rating of 2 at the Tesco and Homebase sites is low. The H91 bus is full at peak times. The H28 bus only runs every 20 mins. There are only 4 trains an hour at Syon Lane station. There is no north south connection by public transport between the Great West Road and Uxbridge Road along Windmill Lane. Considerable improvements to local public transport would be needed if these developments were to go ahead and the number of local residents was to increase substantially.

13. ENVIRONMENT & POLLUTION

- 13.1. Traffic and pollution are key issues to developing this Site. The area is already at its limit in terms of traffic intensity and pollution during a much-extended part of the day. The predicted move to hybrid and electrical cars will have a limited positive impact on congestion and pollution for two reasons. Firstly, the Government's recent proposal to ban petrol & diesel cars is likely to be implemented in 2035 at the very earliest. However, the "residual" number of petrol & diesel cars already on the road will continue to be operational for many years (until their owners decide to scrap them). So, their negative environmental impact will continue to be felt for many years, well beyond 2035. In the hypothetical case where all cars driven were assumed to be electric, road congestion, pollution and health hazards from their braking systems (harmful particulates) will continue and could not be mitigated, until a significant step-change in technology occurs.
- 13.2. Every new car/vehicle parking space created on any of the developments must have a charging point. All vehicle parking spaces, both domestic and commercial, resident and non-resident, allocated and non-allocated, etc., on both the sites, should have an electric charging point. Not a few or half dozen spaces away over there is a distant corner on the development, but all spaces.
- 13.3. Hounslow has declared a Climate Emergency. We should be aiming for carbon neutral, zero-emitting homes, using renewable energy for heating, air conditioning, cooking, hot water, etc., including use of solar panels.
- 13.4. Homes should be built in such a way as to allow change to newer technology for heating, etc.

14. FIRE & SAFETY

- 14.1. Fire and safety issues associated with high rise buildings are critical, and it is expected that the design will take on board lessons learned from the Grenfell tragedy.

OWGRA hope that our wish list and concerns are useful to Berkeley St Edward and that we will continue to work constructively together to achieve developments which we will all appreciate.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Stryjak on behalf of
OWGRA (Osterley & Wyke Green Residents' Association) & Tesco/Homebase Residents' Action Group