

Development proposal for The Former Dairy Crest Milk Depot Site, Lower Marsh Lane

Some Residents' Concerns

The Spring Grove Residents' Association (SGRA) has received the following observations and concerns from residents in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development (St Mark's Neighbourhood). Since residents in the SGRA area have not been well informed about the proposals so far, and we do not have an opportunity for further discussion before the deadline for comments (8th May), we feel it is right to share them. They have been written to align with some of the Council's 'material planning considerations' – a requirement if comments are to be taken into consideration in the planning process:

1. It is hardly surprising that the [public information] event in December was poorly attended - we didn't receive the notification and neither did a number of our neighbours. We weren't able to get details after the event and the council rejected an foi [freedom of information] request on the basis of confidentiality.
2. Re proposed decision making process. The developers have paid for a 'Planning Performance Agreement' which is a fast track process. The application will be discussed at the Surbiton Neighbourhood Committee on 20 May before going to Development Control Committee on 10 June. It is NOT going to Kingston Neighbourhood Committee despite having an impact on [SGRA] residents, routes and services in the area. This means (unless there is a change of heart) that you [SGRA] will not have a chance to quiz councillors about the application and have a response from the Neighbourhood Committee to the Development Control Committee.
3. Some St Mark's residents believe this development is intended to create a precedent for density and scale - particularly height - outside of the two town centres. Previous applications for large scale developments on Lamberts Road and the junction of Burney Road with Villiers Avenue failed because the limit of Surbiton Town centre is at the junction of Ewell Road and Lamberts Road. That was considered the boundary between the town and the residential areas. The developer has said that the Villiers Point development will create a new centre. If this development succeeds it will create a new high point from which to scale further developments on plots adjacent or close to the new development, radically altering the character of the area.
4. Spring Grove residents may want to comment on the lack of consideration of the characteristics of Grove Lane and Lingfield Avenue and the lack of a retail impact assessment, particularly in relation to the potential impact on the viability of the Bloomfield Road parade.

5. The transport assessment assumes no additional trips will be generated by the new retail units and that trips will be pass-by or walked/cycled. The assessment understates the quantum between baseline trip demand and the probable trip and parking demand and so falls below the threshold for fuller modelling of impacts on the roundabout and adjacent roads. SGRA residents will feel the greatest impact from extra parking demand at weekends and evenings, pressure on the roundabout and roads leading off it and on the capacity of bus services at peak times. This area has a 1b ptal classification, only 1 up from 1a which is the worst level of public transport accessibility. This is driven by the poor frequency of the bus services and the distance of the railway stations (beyond thresholds for walking).
6. There is no affordable housing provision commitment nor any community investment beyond resurfacing land which cannot be built on (the so-called piazza) with one lone tree replacing the several already felled. Any s106 or community infrastructure levy is to be discussed after approval with no commitment prior. 83 new units will have an impact on services and amenities.
7. Other considerations are impact on bats and other wildlife. The bat survey needs to be repeated and mitigation put in place - the height of the buildings will interrupt any bat corridors and lighting will disturb their movements through the area.
8. Residents in closer proximity are impacted by overshadowing and loss of privacy. The development will require deep excavation and a deep cut into the clay hillside, creating ground instability issues during and after construction. No impact assessment has been made and so these risks have not been accounted for in the design.
9. Although not identified formally as an archaeological priority area, the junction of Lower Marsh Lane and Villiers Avenue has been a crossroads for half a millennium. In 1648 there was a skirmish between Royalists and Parliamentarians in this location which resulted in the death of Sir Francis Villiers, brother of the Duke of Buckingham. It is after this event that several roads and the pub are named. The development includes a basement car park which will require excavation, this should be subject to a watching brief.
10. There is a growing list of policies that this development does not accord with, but collation is being hampered by the removal of documentation from the website. This could be an oversight by the Council. St Mark's residents have asked for copies and will ask that they are republished so that all residents can see them.

Received by SGRA 26/4/15