

24 September Planning Speaker Statements

#5 - 26/00318/FUL University Sports and Athletics Track, Wilberforce Road - Local Resident

I am concerned about how the planning balance of benefit versus harm is being drawn.

Clearly the existing luminaires need replacing to secure the benefit of continued operation of the track, as the report says. Replacement with LED lights, requiring replacement columns due to increased weight, can bring benefit too. But achieving the public benefit of continued safe operation of the athletics track itself, to the official standard for running track, does not require the columns to be increased in height to 18m.

The 'Lighting Addendum' uploaded on 25th June recognises this. Its reason for rejecting a 'do-minimum' scenario which it accepts can maintain safe operation of the existing low-light activities at the appropriate standard (with added energy-saving benefit) is that this solution would not enable safety of the infield training activities (throwing and pole vault) which are now being sought. It seems that this – an extension of how the site operates - is the motivation for the higher columns which create the acknowledged harm to the heritage asset of the West Cambridge Conservation Area and lead to the Conservation officer objecting to the plans.

This does not emerge clearly in the summary planning balance, which does not distinguish between the benefits of keeping the site operating safely and of intensifying its use with newly-enabled infield activities during the darker part of the year. However, athletes already have the benefit of being able to train in infield events at suitable facilities within a reasonable radius (e.g. in St Ives), whereas there is no alternative way of eliminating the acknowledged harm to the heritage asset.

The heritage asset harm is unavoidably site-specific, but training in throwing and pole vault events is not. This suggests they might warrant different weighting in the calculation.

And though the application has to be considered on its merits in relation to current circumstances, the circumstances surely do include accumulated harm to the character of the heritage asset and to iconic views into and out of the city. If a bridge with a given carrying capacity is loaded more and more, the fact that the last increment in loading that leads to its collapse is itself not hugely substantial is no comfort [last straw/camel's back].

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#11 - 26/02675/FUL Brooks Road - Local Resident

The planning application and officer recommendation have failed to properly factor in the significance of the streetscape, and the cultural and historical importance of the houses on Brooks Rd. These houses were built in c. 1937 by local builders effectively for the Cambridge Borough (now Council) to create affordable rental housing for the working class, using a unique local brick. These houses, which remain relatively unaltered, were once common place in Cambridge. Now that is not so, they have been systematically altered, demolished, rendered, clad, etc. The Brooks Rd area consists of 72 houses, 1 of whose appearance has materially altered with a stone clad. The remaining 71 houses all retain the original brickwork and roof materials. None of these have been rendered, and all share the uniform design and style from when they were built. **The Planning Officer's recommendation says (1.5)** that the rendered colour changes to be '*relatively minor*' and '*not significantly changing the visual prominence of the dwellings nor alter local character*'. This is simply not true, as all bar one are original Cambridge/Burwell bricks, and cladding 34 out of 72 houses is very significant. **(2.2)** They say that "*the properties to be developed do not feature clear uniform design*". This is simply not true, they are all of a matching design principle, down to and including the outside brick built sheds. **(2.4)** "*The area already features examples of rendered homes*" – again simply not true/disingenuous, and not attempting to compare like with like. **(12.3)** "*It is recognized that a large-scale rendering of the properties on brooks road would result in a noticeable departure in appearance for the local area.*"." One may also note the cited efforts to have the proposed render match the existing context where render has

already been applied to neighbouring properties.” Again, no properties in the Brooks Rd area have been rendered, so this can’t be true. “It is argued here that rationale and benefits of improved energy efficiency for the developed homes, combined with efforts to preserve the local character, would be sufficient to find the disappearance of the original brickwork negligible here” I categorically dispute this. I would propose that the Council Planners have not fully researched, and therefore do not know, how many largely unaltered original mid 1930s local brick built Workers Social Houses they have in Cambridge. Very few is the answer. The Brooks Road houses are a very rare dwelling group indeed.

The Planning Application itself is a very generic application by a company whose business aim is to procure the work from the Council to externally clad the properties on Brooks Rd. I would suggest the document is a cut and paste with no thought given to the actual area where the application is submitted. Their Design and Access Statement seeks to justify the proposal solely on a net zero argument, and does not consider the existing appearance of the Brooks Rd area, and the adverse impact of their proposal. They show an individual house clad against another but no street view. There was no consideration given to alternative finishes such as brick slips as an alternative to preserve the area’s character.

I appeal to the Planning Committee to accept that the presenting officer’s case is factually incorrect as presented in my case above, and has downplayed the historical, cultural, and aesthetic significance of the Brooks Rd houses. This will be a huge loss to Cambridge and ruin Brooks Rd for ever if the application is approved, please do not let that happen.

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