

**DRAFT**

**PP/12/01833 - KENSINGTON ACADEMY AND LEISURE CENTRE: COMMENTS ON PLANNING APPLICATION**

**1 Introduction**

1.1 This document provides representations on the above planning application on behalf of the following groups (referred to as 'the community' in this report):

- Grenfell Action Group
- Grenfell Leaseholders Association
- Lancaster West Estate Management Board
- Lancaster West Residents Association

**2 General Comment**

2.1 The need for a new secondary school for north Kensington is widely recognised, but community remains concerned in relation to the selection of the Lancaster West estate as the preferred location for a new academy. The community does not consider that the Council has engaged in a robust site selection procedure and that the site has been wrongly identified for this major development. Consequently, the community considers that if constructed, the academy will result in significantly adverse impacts upon the living environment of residents within the estate. Therefore, the community maintains a strong objection to the proposal as submitted.

2.2 Further more detailed comments in relation to specific aspects of the proposals are listed below.

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### **3 Wider Development Issues**

- 3.1 The proposal is one of a number of major development proposals and recently completed schemes in north Kensington and its immediate surroundings, including Imperial Wharf, Westfield, Shepherd's Bush and White City. It is felt that the interrelationships between these development proposals have not been fully considered so that their impacts can be managed in the most effective way and to ensure that they deliver the widest possible benefits to their communities.

### **4 The Scale and Nature of Development**

- 4.1 The general scale of development of the school is too large for the site. The need to construct a five storey building would seem to validate this assertion. The estate is already densely developed with little open space and these open areas are further undermined by this proposal.
- 4.2 The architectural style of the proposal is unsightly and out of scale and keeping with the immediate environment. It does not deliver landmark quality buildings as stated by the Council.
- 4.3 The academy and leisure centre have multiple entrances along the southern edge of both structures. These will completely dominate the green-space/ open-space and will have a serious negative impact on residential amenity in that whole area. As a consequence, Lancaster Green will no longer have any residential amenity value as the open space appears to be designed and laid out to serve the needs of academy and leisure centre users rather than local residents.

### **5 The Academy**

- 5.1 The community feels that the development of the academy brings no real benefits to the community and that it is being imposed upon it without proper discussion or public involvement, especially during the earlier stages of the project when the site was identified within the Council's emerging LDF Core Strategy.
- 5.2 The community maintains its belief that the Council's site selection process was fundamentally flawed. Alternative sites, such as the former Kensal Rise gasworks would have provided a better location for an academy of this scale. The Council seems to have

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used its ownership of the proposed site as the reason for the location of the academy to the exclusion of all other factors.

- 5.3 The academy has a capacity of 1140 students, yet only very limited open space is included within the boundary of the school. This comprises a terrace, small playground and MUGA. It is clear that this level of recreational space is grossly insufficient for the needs of so many children. The limited capacity of such spaces means that children are likely to occupy these spaces on a 'rota' basis meaning that noise emanating from these areas is likely to be present throughout most of the school day. In addition, the shape of the academy building (a building on the northern flank of the site with wings on the eastern and western boundaries) is likely to focus noise towards the residents of Grenfell Tower. Such noise will undoubtedly be detrimental to the amenities of residents. Residents have raised the need to provide double glazing to mitigate against external noise, the presence of the academy would seemingly reinforce this need for those residents within Grenfell Tower, Verity Close, Whitchurch, Blechynden, Grenfell and Barandon Walks.
- 5.4 There has also been recent experience of the operation of new academies elsewhere within the Borough. Chelsea academy now needs additional classroom space which has led to a further reduction in the amount of recreational space within the school. It remains a possibility that similar developments would be likely at the proposed north Kensington academy.
- 5.5 The location of the MUGA on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the academy is likely to be detrimental to the amenities of residents as a result of noise (see also para. 5.3) and the visual impact of floodlighting for the facility. The availability of the MUGA for community use is also likely to exacerbate issues as its use during evenings and weekends will increase the impact upon residents, particularly in Grenfell Tower.
- 5.6 The arrival and departure of over 1100 students will undoubtedly create significant impacts on the existing community. While a reasonable network of public transport exists, it is still likely that many parents will choose to drop off or collect their children by private car adding to congestion, noise and pollution around the immediate area.
- 5.7 It is likely that an increased number of bus and coach journeys will be made to and from the proposed academy. The loss of the existing car park on Silchester Road will mean that buses and coaches will park and wait on street causing congestion, noise and pollution.

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- 5.8 In addition to the transport related impacts of students moving to and from the academy site, there is a significant risk of anti-social behaviour by students at the beginning and end of the school day. Many schools put in place procedures to encourage children to leave the school site quickly at the end of the day, but such measures mean that children are likely to congregate in areas just beyond the school perimeter (e.g., around Grenfell Tower and near Verity Close) causing nuisance to nearby residents. There is also previous evidence of gang related activity within the general area and it is likely that such problems may increase with the addition of a large group of young people to this general area. Residents have raised concerns about this issue previously, but have received no response from the Council.
- 5.9 In general terms, the community reaffirms its belief that the proposed site is too small to accommodate an academy of this scale, this is evidenced by the fact that the proposed academy is a five storey building with a major element of its recreational provision to be sited at third floor level. The community believes that it will be overwhelmed by this proposal and that there will be severe negative impacts upon the existing community.
- 5.10 The application states that the academy's educational focus will be in the creative arts and entrepreneurship. While this is not a planning matter, the community believes that the focus of such a major facility (if developed) should be on the attainment of high educational standards in general rather than a 'watering down' to creative subjects.
- 5.11 In overall terms, the community believes that the proposed academy is not fit for purpose. While the community considers that the impacts upon itself would be significant, it also believes that the proposed academy would create a substandard learning environment for its students and that it is likely that its lifespan would be reduced as a consequence. This further illustrates the view of residents that the proposal has not been properly conceived and that it will not deliver a high quality facility.

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## **6 The Leisure Centre**

- 6.1 The community believes that it is not necessary at this time to instigate redevelopment of the leisure centre and that the inclusion of such plans is an attempt to deflect attention from the unacceptable impacts that would arise from the construction of the academy. The proposal would mean that any new leisure centre would be the third such building in the area in the past 50 years and that this does not represent a prudent use of Council resources.
- 6.2 The proposed construction programme would mean that there would be no continuity of service and the community would face a lengthy time period when no dedicated leisure facilities were available to the residents of north Kensington, resulting in lengthy journeys to other locations.
- 6.3 The proposed leisure centre would have its main entrance on its western frontage, there are concerns that this arrangement would lead to additional impacts upon the residents of Treadgold House.
- 6.4 The proposed facilities within the leisure centre include the provision of a smaller main swimming pool. The community believes that this is an inappropriate legacy, especially in the year of the London Olympics.

## **7 Open Space, Environment and Ecology**

- 7.1 The proposed development will reduce the amount of open space available within the Lancaster West estate. As the area is already densely developed, open space of any type is at a premium and is highly valued by the community. The proposal would result in the loss of informal grassed areas and mature trees. These are areas that are well used by all members of the community for informal play, general relaxation, sitting out and dog walking and their loss would have a significant impact upon residents.
- 7.2 While Lancaster West is a highly urban location, there are pockets of ecological and environmental interest within the area. There is a healthy population of local birds including mistle thrushes and woodpeckers that would be at risk should development proceed.

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## **8 Transport**

- 8.1 As is noted in para. 3.1, the community is concerned about the wider transport implications of the proposed development, especially in the light of wider major developments in west London. Additional traffic from surrounding areas already uses Bramley Road and St Mark's Road as short cuts and rat runs and there is an additional concern that the creation of a new through route via Grenfell Road will lead to an increase in rat running that will create additional, noise, pollution and create road safety risks for students and residents, specifically young children, elderly and the disabled.
- 8.2 The new through route via Grenfell Road is a major concern to the local community and it does not believe that the effects of this route have been properly assessed. At the current time, this route is a private route that is accessible only to residents, servicing vehicles and the emergency services. The opening of this route will inevitably lead to a high level of usage, especially at peak periods as drivers seek to avoid delays on other parts of the road network. Vehicle movements will create conflicts with residents within the area and may also be a danger to students arriving at school during the morning peak period. It is recognised that efforts have been made to design the road so that vehicle speeds can be controlled, but in reality, drivers seeking to avoid delays elsewhere will not be discouraged from using this route.
- 8.3 There is concern that the opening of Grenfell Road to all traffic will inhibit emergency vehicle access to Grenfell Tower and Grenfell, Barandon, Testerton and Hurstway Walks.
- 8.4 The new route will also result in the loss of further green space. This is unnecessary.
- 8.5 The construction of the academy will result in the loss of the Silchester Road car park which provides car parking for leisure centre users and residents. The community objects to the loss of this car parking and wishes to see appropriate re-provision of car parking spaces.

## **9 Impacts from Construction**

- 9.1 There is widespread concern within the community about the impacts of the construction should the planning application be approved. There are particular concerns in relation to:
- Noise during construction

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- Dust generation
- Vibration
- Traffic flows, particularly HGVs
- Management of contaminated land or materials within the site.

## **10 Infrastructure**

- 10.1 There is a general concern that the scale of the proposed development will place a great strain on available infrastructure within the area, particularly the transport network.
- 10.2 The Counter's Creek sewer is already believed to be at or near capacity and a major development of this type cannot be accommodated.

## **11 Other Matters**

- 11.1 The community considers that the proposals will reinforce the feeling of social segregation within Lancaster West as the development is strongly opposed by the community.
- 11.2 The leaseholders of Grenfell Tower are opposed to the proposals as they feel that the development will have a detrimental effect upon the value and saleability of their properties.

## **12 Conclusions**

- 12.1 In summary, the community firmly opposes the planning application for the construction of the north Kensington academy and leisure centre as it believes that the proposals are seriously detrimental to the amenity of existing residents, due to the following factors:
- i. The proposals would result in the loss of an area of open space and recreational facilities that are crucially important to the local community.
  - ii. The proposed development would result in an intensification of development in an already densely developed area.
  - iii. The proposed reopening of the area to vehicular traffic would be detrimental to amenity and increase risks for residents and leisure centre users.

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- iv. The proposed academy is poorly designed and would create a poor neighbour to the existing estate and increase the risk of anti-social behaviour.
- v. The proposed academy would not be fit for purpose and provide a poor environment for future learning.

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