



Statement by the Egham Residents' Association on planning application RU17/1932 - Garages at Ripley Avenue EGHAM TW20 9QZ

The Egham Residents' Association will be making a representation to Runnymede Borough Council expressing its concerns about this planning application.

In doing so, it will take no account of the fact that the site for the scheme - for five 2-bedroom houses and 10 2-bedroom flats - includes a strip of land that Runnymede Council has decided to purchase from ERA's chairman, Jim Pearcey.

ERA regrets and refutes the suggestion and innuendo that has already appeared on social media that it will treat this application differently. It won't. Mr Pearcey has been told that and he would expect nothing else.

Before formally submitting its response to RBC, ERA is seeking clarification on a number of points.

The council's committee resolved in November to purchase a piece of Mr Pearcey's nursery land housing to facilitate a scheme for "affordable housing". The planning application is also listed by the council as being for "affordable housing". But on the planning application form - submitted by the council, not by Mr Pearcey - there is reference to "social rented housing". ERA believes that there must be no ambiguity or room for misunderstanding on this point.

ERA also regards it as imperative that there must be no chance of any housing units on the site being purchased by landlords to be occupied by students. The Ripley Avenue/Lynwood Avenue area has been greatly affected by this phenomenon in recent years. ERA has been campaigning month after month, week after week, on this matter since the council approved Royal Holloway College's Masterplan scheme for expansion (which ERA strongly opposed). There is no chance of ERA turning a blind eye in this case.

Part of the site, between Ripley Avenue and The Crescent, is currently occupied by garages. Several of them are in a very poor state and one of them seemed quite recently to have someone living in it.

To say the least, the garage area is not attractive. But the proposal for housing units on the site has understandably given rise to concerns about access and infrastructure.

The existing access is very narrow. Could it really cope with the traffic that would be generated by the occupants of the proposed housing units? Would emergency vehicles be able to access the new houses at all (assuming they had managed to battle their way through the parked cars in Ripley Avenue and neighbouring streets)?

Many of the remaining families in this part of Egham feel under siege. And the planners and highways authorities at RBC and Surrey County Council really do need to wake up and show empathy for their situation.

ERA is currently engaged in trying to get answers to the questions mentioned above and others – including the possibility of keeping a pedestrian throughway from Ripley Avenue to The Crescent. The exact nature of its formal submission to RBC will obviously reflect its success or otherwise in getting answers and what the answers are.

Representations should be sent to RBC by December 20, but the application will not be considered at the meeting of the council's planning committee on that date. It will possibly go to a meeting on January 24.

Chris Fisher

Vice-chairman, ERA

December 12, 2017