



# *The Counties Residents' Association*

*Protecting the interests of the community*

## **CRA Representation/Speech to the Public Inquiry for 3398/08 and 2393/09**

Good morning/afternoon, my name is Malcolm Dowers and I am here to **officially** speak on behalf of the Counties Residents' Association (CRA). I appreciate that the representation made by Mrs Zammett may have covered some CRA related ground, inevitable given she is our Chair, but I think you will find there to be no duplication of points here.

As has been mentioned I am the primary CRA representative on the Conservation Advisory Panel (CAP) and as to the question of CAP member's qualifications, I hold an Honours Degree in Environmental Engineering (aka Building Services Engineering). My authority with respect to CAP is therefore based purely on my familiarity with the area and its history, my experience with the planning system resulting from my general CRA activities and my interest in protecting my neighbourhood. For the record I joined CAP after Scheme 2's refusal and as a result of my negotiations with Telford Homes on behalf of the CRA for Scheme 3, I excused myself from CAP's deliberations at their December 2009 meeting. Minutes from CAP's meetings can verify this.

Before I get into the schemes themselves we would like to respond to a letter which has been placed on the appeal file from Mr. C. Niall of 26 Warwick Road, a copy of which we have only just received. We will not respond to the bulk of his letter as most seems irrelevant, or at least peripheral, to the case, however, we do wish to refute the statements made in the third paragraph.

Whilst it is true that we do not have Mr Niall's mandate, for he is not a member of our organisation, we do have a clear mandate from our members and other residents. This mandate has evolved through the course of petitions, consultations, public meetings, general feedback and of course individual one-on-one discussions as we meet members in the street and at other community functions. In fact we were especially cautious with our current stance regarding Scheme 3 and we undertook extra effort to ensure we were acting in accordance with our member's wishes.

With our mandate established I'll now turn to the specifics of this Inquiry, but before I turn to the specifics of the schemes, I would like to make a few comments on some of the evidence we have heard to date.

The consultation process, which formed part of the Consultant's Appraisal, consisted of a short postal questionnaire. The CRA felt that the manner in which that questionnaire was distributed and the procedure for its return was inadequate. We therefore took it upon ourselves to redistribute a further copy of that questionnaire to all residents and a stamped address envelope for its return. Distribution included the post box erected on site following the demolition of the Chepstow house. Our point here is that Telford Homes did have the same opportunity as all other residents/landowners to be part of the consultation process. Indeed it could also be argued that all residents, including Telford Homes, had a greater opportunity than normal to express their views given the CRA's reissuing of the questionnaire.

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Much has been made of the discrepancy between the areas that the Consultant's appraisal recommended for Conservation Area designation and the larger area eventually designated. As interesting as such an analysis maybe, isn't the main point that Chepstow is within Area 3 and that was always recommended for designation? We therefore submit that if you are seeking to identify the framework for defining or judging the Conservation Area, the Consultant's appraisal, at least in terms of Areas 1-3, could be utilised. In general terms the CRA support the wider area designation given that it contains several statutory listed buildings (card house, temple folly and The Shrubberies) and that we believe several other buildings may warrant Local Listing (the CRA are working on such a proposal). The extra areas are all part of the historical Wanstead Grove Estate and are therefore NOT without merit.

One final issue before I turn to the scheme specific issues. The appeal for Scheme 2 was made well after the application for Scheme 3 was launched. If Telford were so confident that Scheme 2 was suitable why wait so long, why submit a new design first? I realise that there is a six month window for launching an appeal, but this only explains why it was launched no later than it was, it doesn't explain the delay. If Scheme 2 was really believed to be good enough, why wait five months and why submit a new application in the interim?

Now I'll turn to our specific issues regarding the two schemes. As we have already made written representations during the initial planning applications and subsequently once the appeals were launched, I will only briefly summarise the key points as we see it. In general terms the CRA is opposed to Scheme 2 and in support of Scheme 3.

We believe that the quality of Scheme 2 was always inadequate given it was designed prior to the designation of the Wanstead Grove Conservation Area. Consequently Scheme 2 would not preserve and enhance our neighbourhood and this was the fundamental basis of its rejection in July 2009. The Scheme 2 houses are of a particularly poor design, a legacy from Scheme 1, which ignore the established uniformity of the area and the existing building line of the street.

The Nutter Lane blocks would be out of character and jarring with the adjacent locally listed Arts and Crafts cottages and would present an unpleasing vista along Nutter Lane and across Nutter Field, exacerbated by their non-parallel orientation. The Art Deco influence is in itself unsuccessful for we believe that in principle these buildings are too small to "pull off" an Art Deco look. We think Art Deco is generally related to much larger buildings, where the size/scale adds to the "imperialistic theme".

Conversely, Scheme 3 was designed after the Conservation Area designation and this is reflected in the higher quality house design, sympathetic with the existing properties and respecting their building line. Additionally the Nutter Lane blocks would complement the Arts and Crafts cottages, both in terms of look and size, whilst the scheme as a whole has a cohesive style. The parallel nature of Blocks B&C also resolves one of the criticisms of Scheme 2, ie the vista across Nutter Field. Additionally whereas Scheme 2 was presented as a *fait accompli* to the various residents groups, Scheme 3 had, in part at least, some pre-application consultation with residents and of course as you will see from the case file, a negotiated redesign of the houses.

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All these improvements with Scheme 3 compared to Scheme 2 are supported by the discussions at the Regulatory Committee in January 2010 where Scheme 3 was described as, and I quote, "almost there" and "only needing one last push" by various committee members. Although such comments are not minuted, Emma Watson of Redbridge and David Durrant of Telford should be able to verify this.

As a result of Scheme 3 needing "one last push", the Wanstead Society has since made some recommendations to Telford regarding minor amendments to the Nutter Lane blocks which would make Scheme 3 acceptable to them, thereby removing the last of the third party objections. The CRA can confirm that we find the proposed minor amendments acceptable and Telford have verbally indicated that in principle they have no issues with the suggestions. Perhaps, if it would not be inappropriate to do so, Telford could be asked to comment on this issue.

We thank you for this opportunity to express our views, should any party wish to raise any questions, I would be pleased to answer them to the best of my ability. As time is pressing and as we may not be able to attend the final day of this Inquiry, we have attached to this representation our suggested conditions for the two schemes. Some of these may be wishful thinking, but we are sure they will be disregarded if necessary.



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## **Suggested Conditions**

### **General/Common Conditions**

1. Working hours:-
  - i) No Sunday or Public Holiday working
  - ii) No noisy work (pile driving, pneumatic drilling etc) on Saturdays or between 6pm-8am on weekdays.
  - iii) No deliveries on Weekends, Public Holidays or between 7pm-7am on Weekdays.
2. Site Work
  - i) All construction vehicles to be parked within the site boundary.
  - ii) All building materials to be contained within site boundary.
  - iii) All waste materials and skips to be contained within site boundary.
  - iv) Road and/or pavement closures to be kept to a minimum.
  - v) Utilities interruptions to be given 7 days warning to all effected households.

### **Conditions specific to Scheme 3 (2393/09).**

- 3) During the negotiations with Telford Homes, the ground floor front bays of Blocks B & C were modified. Telford have verbally described it as a drawing error that they now appear larger than the balconies above them. We therefore request the condition that the drawing error is corrected and the bay windows shrunk to the depth of the balconies above as per the original agreement.
- 4) During the negotiations with Telford Homes, there was a verbal agreement that the porch roof of Block B would be changed to a design matching that currently shown for Block C. This change was overlooked in the rush to change the design of the houses and we request the condition that this design is changed.

### **Conditions specific to Scheme 2 (3398/08) - although we maintain our objective stance to this scheme**

- 5) Telford Homes have verbally offered to incorporate the Scheme 3 houses into the design of Scheme 2 should Scheme 2 be the only scheme to be approved. We would therefore like this to become a condition for Scheme 2.
- 6) We would like Block C to be rotated so it were parallel to Block B as the general arrangement of these blocks seen in Scheme 3.

The CRA appreciate that some of the above conditions may be beyond that which would normally be considered as possible, however, perhaps both parties (ie Redbridge and Telford) could be asked whether they would accept such conditions in principle.