

Helen Hayes MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr John Paschoud  
Chair, Strategic Planning Committee  
Lewisham Council

Our Ref: ZA25310

29 June 2021

Dear Cllr Paschoud,

**Planning Application DC/20/115160 Mais House, Sydenham Hill**

We are writing on behalf of our constituents in Dulwich Wood ward who are very concerned at the haste in which Lewisham Council is re-considering the planning application for Mais House. As you will know, Mais House is located on Sydenham Hill, a boundary road between Southwark and Lewisham. The redevelopment of Mais House will therefore have a significant impact on our constituents living on the Southwark side of Sydenham Hill.

We fully accept the urgent need for more social housing. It is, however, important that plans for new housing are developed with the involvement of local communities, and are well designed to ensure that they provide high quality, sustainable places to live for the long term.

We have previously written to Lewisham Council's planning department to raise the following concerns about the planning application for Mais House, on behalf of our constituents:

- 1. The proposed height of the new development which residents consider will be overbearing at the top of the Sydenham Hill ridge and set a precedent which could result in overdevelopment along the ridge.*
- 2. The impact on transport and parking. Sydenham Hill is served by only two bus routes and has seen increasing traffic and parking pressure in recent years. It is not clear from the proposals that this application would result in any increased investment in public transport capacity and residents are concerned that the application will result in a considerable increase in parking pressure along Sydenham Hill, and additional road congestion with consequent impacts on air quality.*
- 3. Lack of amenity space. My constituents are concerned that the scheme increases density on the Mais House site to such an extent that the level of amenity space will be inadequate for the residents it serves.*
- 4. Impact on local health services. My constituents have raised concerns that nearby GP practices already have oversubscribed patient lists and it can be difficult to get appointments. It is not clear that this application makes any contribution to increasing capacity in local primary care services to accommodate an increase in the number of residents living on the Mais House site. We have also written specifically to raise concerns about the loss of light resulting from the current planning application for residents of the Castle Bar Care Home on Sydenham Hill. These concerns are particularly important since frail care home residents often spend long periods of time in their rooms, and the loss of light in these circumstances is a significant detriment.*

We have not received a detailed response to these representations, and we do not believe that these issues have been addressed through amendments to the design of the scheme. These concerns therefore remain, and we would be grateful if the committee could ensure that they are

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fully considered and addressed.

We are further concerned that, following the court judgement which quashed the Council's previous planning decision, officers have moved with extreme haste to bring the application before your committee again. The basis of the court judgement was that the Council had not properly presented, and the Strategic Planning Committee had not therefore properly been able to consider, a number of important technical documents including reports by the Council's Conservation Officer and Tree Officer and the conclusions of Lewisham's Design Review Panel. While these reports, and representations from the Twentieth Century Society have now been included with the officers' report for the committee's consideration, we are concerned that there has not been adequate time for any meaningful action to be taken in response to them.

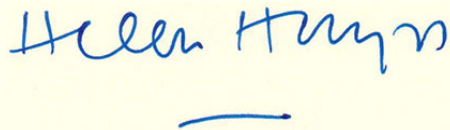
We are particularly concerned that the Council's Conservation Officer considers that the current proposal will cause harm to the Conservation Area, and that Lewisham's Design Review Panel concludes that although the design has improved somewhat there remain significant design concerns which should be addressed.

We have subsequently been contacted by the Sydenham Society, the Forest Hill Society, the Dulwich Society and the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum who are all asking the Council to refuse this application and to work with the applicant and the local community, according to constructive proposals made by the Lewisham Design Review Panel, to prepare an alternative scheme which delivers much-needed social housing in a way which is compatible with the Conservation Area, and addresses the concerns of the local community and the Council's Conservation Officer, Tree Officer and Design Review Panel.

We urge you to respond positively to this request and to refuse this application so that an alternative proposal can be prepared without further delay.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,



Helen Hayes MP

Cllr Andy Simmons, Dulwich Wood Ward Councillor  
Cllr Catherine Rose, Dulwich Wood Ward Councillor

cc. all members of the Strategic Planning Committee