



Our Ref: ER19221
28 June 2021

RE: Objection to Planning Application DC/20/115180, Corporation of London: Redevelopment of Mais House/Otto Close Garages. Lewisham Council's Strategic Planning Committee: Tuesday 29th June 2021

Dear Cllr Paschoud,

I have been contacted by a number of the local amenity societies ahead of tomorrow's Planning Committee meeting requesting that the views and concerns of residents are taken into consideration before decisions are made in relation to the Mais House Redevelopment.

The original decision dated 20th November 2020 to grant the planning application was quashed by Judicial Review on the grounds of procedural flaws. I am acutely aware of the housing shortage in Lewisham, indeed housing makes up the majority of the casework myself and my team deal with, and I am committed to new social housing being built across the Borough. However, I do also believe that it is important to work alongside the local community, gaining their support for revised redevelopment plans that go before the committee.

I understand that a joint letter from Sydenham Society, Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum, The Dulwich Society and Forest Hill Society has been sent to Lewisham Council and the Planning Committee for review and consideration. The letter requests the opportunity for a group of professional architects to work with Lewisham Council on a revised application for the site. This joint approach does seem to be a constructive proposal in ensuring new homes are built and local people feel heard. Residents are still understandably very much concerned and unhappy with the height and mass of the proposed Mais House redevelopment. The community are not opposed to the redevelopment of the estate, however I would really welcome it if Lewisham Council were able to work with residents to ensure they have a say and are happy with designs before any further planning applications for Mais House are approved.

I therefore ask that Lewisham Council's Strategic Planning Committee to take into account the views of local residents at the meeting tomorrow and reject any decision in relation to Mais House until planning Officers have worked with the local community to find a solution that addresses their concerns. I am attaching below a copy of the requests I have received from the Sydenham Society, Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum, The Dulwich Society and Forest Hill Society and I ask that these to be taken into consideration tomorrow.

I would be very grateful for an update in relation to this matter.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ellie Reeves".

Ellie Reeves
Member of Parliament for Lewisham West and Penge
Cc: Members of the Committee

Request that you:

- i. Give full weight to the expert opinion offered by Lewisham's Design Review Panel, the Council's Conservation Officer, the Council's Tree Officer and the Twentieth Century Society,
- ii. Reject the current Application because of the identified harms that would be caused by it.
- iii. Ask their Officers to work with the Developer and the local community to promote an alternative development for this site that will provide social housing in a way that preserves the trees and green areas of the site, and provides a quality of homes and a living environment for existing and later residents that future generations will thank them for.
- iv. Recognise that Lewisham's own Design Review Panel have made positive suggestions that offer a constructive way forward for a fresh, genuine conversation with the community to work out a future for this site that works locally and for Lewisham, ideally through a properly-funded co-design approach. Please listen to them.

A second chance to do the right thing: There is strong feeling in the community that Lewisham Council's original decision to grant the application was wrong and that this development is really not what Lewisham needs. In her judgment at the judicial review HH Mrs Justice Lang DBE (at para 157) noted "... the number of significant errors made by the Council..." She added (at para 158): "In my judgment, if the legal errors which I have identified above had not occurred, it is possible that the Members would have concluded that the IP [Interested Party] ought to re-consider the height and scale of the proposed development, and submit a more acceptable proposal." We appreciate it takes courage to listen, look again and take a different view.

We hope that the Committee can be bold enough to do that. This would do much to help counter the local cynicism that says there is no point participating because you will not be listened to; and to show Lewisham's commitment to real community engagement. We would welcome the provision of more social housing on the estate. But we want the right housing on the right scale with the right balance of preservation of what already exists and protection of amenity for those living there and proper forethought about the living conditions for the new occupants.

The decision to be made by the Strategic Planning Committee will have long-term effects. If you approve this application the new build will stand visible for miles around as a symbol that you were not willing to listen. If however you reject this application and agree to what we and your own Consultees are asking, you will be creating homes that will nurture and support families for decades to come.

Background: For those not familiar with the application, Mais House was a former c 65-unit sheltered housing scheme forming part of the Corporation of London's Sydenham Hill Estate which also comprises Lammas Green, a post-war Grade II listed Council estate and Otto Close, a 1970s extension. The site is a prominent one with a high level of conservation area protection. It is located on Sydenham Hill ridge, a currently unbroken wooded ridge with protected views, forming part of the London skyline. It adjoins Dulwich and Sydenham Hill Woods. It is environmentally sensitive, located in a conservation area and borders a SINC, a unique habitat which is home to bats, stag beetles etc. The steep gradients, the quality of the existing build styles, and the sensitivity of the local environment make the constraints of this unusual site hard to understand on the committee's papers. We therefore ask the Committee to make a site visit. If you are on the Committee and do not have intimate knowledge of the site and its complex topography, please do visit to see for yourself.