

Comment on a planning application

Application Details

Application: 22/0902/FUL

Address: The Stag Brewery Lower Richmond Road Mortlake London SW14 7ET

Proposal: Erection of a three-storey building to provide a new secondary school with sixth form; sports pitch with floodlighting, external MUGA and play space; and associated external works including landscaping, car and cycle parking, new access routes and other associated works

Comments Made By

Name: Mrs. Elizabeth Calfe

Address: 217 Sheen Lane East Sheen London SW14 8LE

Comments

Type of comment: Object to the proposal

Comment: There has been not change to the situation regarding secondary schools in the area in the 8 or 9 months since the previous planning application was submitted. There is still no need for a new secondary school in the area and if the plan goes ahead it will only serve to undermine the existing state secondary schools in the area.

As someone who's children have and do attend the local state primary and secondary schools, I've watched closely as the provision of schools in the Richmond/Sheen/Barnes area has grown and improved and I feel well qualified to comment on the proposed secondary school on the old Stag Brewery site.

Christ's School and Richmond Park Academy (RPA) serve the local area and beyond very well. They are fully, but not over, subscribed and have sufficient space to expand if required in the future.

Having had 2 children who started school in 2010 and 2013, I have witnessed the expansion of our local primary schools. Initially, the council were slow to respond to a shortage of primary school places and ended up playing 'catch up' in order to provide sufficient space for local children. The birthrate has subsequently fallen and our local schools now find themselves with classes that are not full. While this is great for teacher to pupil ratios, due to the way in which government funds schools on a per pupil basis, schools are finding themselves increasingly under funded which is not good for our children.

The bulge classes of the 2010s are currently in secondary school so any capacity issues for Christ's and RPA would have surfaced by now however both schools are maintaining good and efficient numbers. With a falling birth rate, there should be no concerns surrounding a lack of places in the foreseeable future.

There are areas of the country which are not well served for secondary schools but this is not one of them. The local secondary education eco system is currently perfectly balanced but the introduction of a new player would result in student numbers and consequently funding being spread more thinly and be a detriment to our local secondary school age children. Unless the council foresees a sudden increase in the Year 7 to Year 13 population of say 1000 children, any increases can and should be managed within our existing local schools.

Analysis by the National Foundation for Educational Research predicts that there will be an increased, national shortage of specialist teachers in a number of secondary school subjects this year. Recruitment in teaching is a particular problem in this part of London as the cost of living is prohibitive to many on teaching salaries, particularly for newly qualified teachers. It's not impossible to see that in addition to spreading the funding more thinly, the competition for teachers will also result in a recruitment crisis for our existing schools and indeed the new school.

The proposed school will inevitably draw students from further afield which will lead to increased congestion to an area of South West London that is already struggling due to the closure of Hammersmith Bridge and with rail services which are already stretched beyond capacity at rush hour.

As a result, I can see no justification for a new secondary school but worse still, I can see it will undermine the excellent state secondary schools that we are fortunate to have in The London Borough of Richmond.