

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: Dr. Geoff Woodhouse

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Comments

Type of comment: Object to the proposal

Comment: I object strongly to this application.

Need.

The need for this new 6FE school has not been established. The case which persuaded DfE to provide it was based on understatement of existing capacity by more than 1,000 places, and overstatement of predicted student numbers. All predictions of need made by Richmond from 2015 onwards have been significantly overstated. DfE has been criticised by the National Audit Office for installing new free schools where there is no demographic need and in consequence destabilising existing local schools. To say that DfE supports this school is not to say that it is needed.

Unsuitability of the site.

Even if the school were needed, the site proposed is unsuitable. The area available for the building is 30% of what is recommended by DfE. Stag Brewery is not an urban site, and such underprovision for a school 'for future generations' is not excusable. This is particularly so post Covid, which has demonstrated the need for adequate open playspace. The available playspace is inadequate for a 1200-pupil school.

It has been claimed that there are no alternative sites for a new 6FE secondary school. This argument presupposes that there is a need. Even if a need were to arise many years from now, there are other sites available, the planning restrictions on which either are non-existent or have been exaggerated in order to exclude them from consideration. Council appears not to have paid adequate attention to paragraph 8.2.9 of its own London Plan policy LP 29, which requires consideration to be given to public transport in order to reduce traffic impacts. The Stag Brewery site is particularly poorly served by buses, and the only access is from an already-congested, polluting main road.

Harms.

Given the lack of any demonstration of need, either short-term or long-term, for this new school, there can be no mitigation of the harms caused by its installation.

Loss of the OOLTI field.

Council policy requires that OOLTI, if lost, must be reprovioned by other land of equal or better quality, quantum and openness. There is no such reprovioning in this case. The green space provided elsewhere on the Stag Brewery site is demonstrably not equal in quality, quantum or openness to the present OOLTI field. Therefore, the loss of OOLTI necessitated by the building of a new secondary school is contrary to Council policy.

Addition to already serious traffic problems.

Hundreds of secondary-school students seeking to cross the Lower Richmond Road to get into the school will create traffic standstill at peak times. Conditions are already close to gridlock. The potential for a serious accident in those

worsened conditions is undeniable.

Permanent increase in the danger at Sheen Lane level crossing.

Thomson House School currently occupies a split site on both sides of this dangerous level crossing. No practicable mitigation of the existing dangers has been found, but removal of Thomson House School to the Stag Brewery site would decrease them. Instead, the dangers will be significantly and permanently increased by the arrival at peak times of secondary-school students either joining or leaving trains at Mortlake Station.

Reduction in the provision of affordable housing.

A new secondary school will take up space that could be used advantageously to provide additional affordable housing.

The application to build this unnecessary school should be rejected.