**Appendix B to Representation from Richard White**
**Email exchange on false information filed on the Richmond Council Stag Brewery website**

From:richard.ahwhite@btopenworld.com<richard.ahwhite@btopenworld.com>
Sent:Thursday, March 14, 2024 8:35 PM
To:Lucy Thatcher <Lucy.Thatcher@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk>
Cc:Cambridge, Julia (Cllr) <Cllr.J.Cambridge@Richmond.gov.uk>
Subject:Stag Brewery Planning Applications

Dear Ms Thatcher

I am writing to you in relation to a concern about information placed on the Council website on the Stag Brewery Planning Applications. You are the addressee on two covering letters to which are attached a total of 89 letters stated to be in support of the Applications.

I have now become aware that a number of the letters purport to be signed by local residents who have no knowledge that the letters were written and do not agree with their content. On the face of it there does seem to have been some kind of identity theft. It raises the question whether any of them are genuine.

This matter was first raised with the Council on 29 February 2024 in respect of two specific victims. Several more have been traced since. I raised it with my local councillor Julia Cambridge on 6 March. She told me on 8 March that she had been assured that they would be taken down. At the time of writing on 14 March the letters have still not been taken down. Inevitably the question arises whether any of them are genuine.

I note that the covering letters addressed to you have the sender's name redacted. Who did that and why? If they were uploaded by an agent for the developers, questions arise about how he or she came by the identifying information, who drafted the letters (which are all similar) and what their motives were.

The letters are dated mid July 2023 but not uploaded to the website until mid December. Were they drawn to the attention of the Planning Committee?
I ask this because two of my local councillors have emphasised the local support for the development. If they have been influenced by these letters, their confidence in local support for the applications, which I do not share, may be misplaced.

I anticipate that the Planning Inspectorate may have already started to look at the papers. They need to be informed that these letters may not be genuine.

Richard White

------ Original Message ------

From: "Lucy Thatcher" <Lucy.Thatcher@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk>
To:
Cc: "Cambridge, Julia (Cllr)" <Cllr.J.Cambridge@Richmond.gov.uk>; "Robert Angus" <Robert.Angus@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk>
Sent: Friday, 22 Mar, 24 At 13:42
Subject: RE: Stag Brewery Planning Applications
Official

Dear Richard

Thank you for your email.

I will be taking this matter up again with the applicants, however when I raised it with them a couple of weeks ago they were equally concerned. They advised their communication consultant set out

We collected our supportive representations via the stag-brewery.co.uk website. Residents were required to fill out their details (Name, Address, Email) via a support form on the home page of the website and agree to the privacy policy.

As per the privacy policy  Clicking send on the support form will sign you up to the campaign and generate a letter of support in your name for the two planning applications being brought forward for the Stag Brewery. This letter may be sent to Richmond Council councillors and officers, the Greater London Authority (GLA), Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), Members of Parliament and the Planning Inspectorate. These organisations may upload this letter publicly on their planning portals and/or website and will adhere with their Privacy Policies.

The Policy also states that users can request that your personal data is deleted at any time by contacting us. By requesting to delete your personal data, your name and all other personal data is removed from our signatories list and will not be counted towards the total signatories  and we have not been contacted by anyone asking to have their data removed.

I have however now taken the representations off the public website.

I do not consider the letter signature has been redacted  just not completed. However, they were submitted by the applicant / agent and updated by the council accordingly alike all representations. However, I made clear to the Planning Committee in July 2023 that such letters were not submitted individually by the authors (this was set out in the addendum  extract below).(Public Pack)Addendum Agenda Supplement for Planning Committee, 19/07/2023 19:00 (richmond.gov.uk)

I have also asked the Appeals Officer to advise the Planning Inspectorate of such concerns.
Regards

Lucy
Lucy Thatcher MRTPI
Strategic Applications Manager (Richmond)
Serving Richmond and Wandsworth Councils
Tel:0208 891 7691
Email:Lucy.Thatcher@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk
Web:www.richmond.gov.uk/www.wandsworth.gov.uk


------ Original Message ------
From:richard.ahwhite@btopenworld.com
To: "Lucy Thatcher" <Lucy.Thatcher@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk>
Cc: "Cambridge, Julia (Cllr)" <Cllr.J.Cambridge@Richmond.gov.uk>; "Robert Angus" <Robert.Angus@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk>
Sent: Friday, 22 Mar, 24 At 22:12
Subject: RE: Stag Brewery Planning Applications
Dear Lucy Thatcher

I note your response below [of 22 March]. It is an explanation but hardly entirely satisfactory.
We do not know when the data was collected. If it was at an exhibition in 2017, as is suspected by numerous local residents, much has changed since. I am sure I do not need to spell out the details given your long association with this development.
It appears from what the communication consultant is quoted as saying that the 'privacy policy' was used to mask a form of consent to supporting the planning applications. You have had emails from local residents stating that they did not know about this so-called support. How many more of the eighty eight 'signatories' fall into this category?
You record that the communication consultant stated "we have not been contacted by anyone asking to have their data removed.It is obvious from discussions I have had with a number of people that they did not know that their data had been stored, nor were they aware that their names had been taken in vain, so how would they know to ask to have their data or the letters removed?
In the circumstances described I am led to wondering if there has been a breach of GDPR in respect of this data. Two of the main principles are that data should be processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner in relation to individuals; and collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes.
You say that the developers were concerned. About what precisely?
You also say that it was made clear to the Planning Committee that they were not individual letters of support, but it is obvious that the Committee and other councillors

knew of their existence. I do not see how they could avoid being influenced by them. I have heard councillors talking about local support, so presumably they felt able to rely on the letters in aid of their campaign, in spite of the far greater number of bona fide objectors.
In my mind this regrettable incident links with what several local councillors have said to me, that they cannot discuss the applications. I am unclear whether that is based on your advice or that of the Leader of the Council. But it does suggest a degree of secrecy in relation to these applications, which they with some unease feel unable to reveal.
I note that the two groups of letters have now been taken down. That leaves eighteen letters of support against 678 objections.
Please describe which concerns the Planning Inspectorate is to be advised of?
It is three weeks since this matter was first raised with you. I am not confident that the Council is currently treating it with the seriousness it deserves. Pleasekeep me informed of developments.

Yours sincerely

Richard White

Dear Ms Thatcher

I note that I have not had a reply to the email below [of 22 March] nor an acknowledgment. I know we have had Easter but it has still been a working week gone by.
Meanwhile I have found another local resident whose name was on a 'letter of support' but knew nothing about it. It adds to my suspicion that this was a calculated attempt to perpetrate a fraud on the local population.
I have had the opportunity to investigate the matter further and discuss with other local lawyers. The view is that an offence may have been committed under section 2 of the Fraud Act 2006. I am currently considering whether a request should be made to the police to investigate. Before doing that I would want to give the Council and the developers every opportunity of providing an innocent explanation. If none is forthcoming surely the Council should itself refer the matter?

Richard White
3 April 2024