

FROM CRERA (Cambridge Road Estate Residents' Association) NEWSLETTER MAY 2013

Plans to build a huge accommodation block for 300 students on Cambridge Road has united local residents on both Cambridge housing estates in a major campaign of opposition – led by the area's three community and regeneration groups. In an unprecedented show of solidarity against the scheme, members of the Cambridge Road Estate Residents' Association (CRERA), the Cambridge Road Estates Community Group (CREst) and the pioneering OneNorbiton urban regeneration company have joined forces in a bid to halt the development – the planning application for which is due to be determined by Kingston Council within the next month.

The would-be developers, AK II Property Investments of Teddington want to build a seven-storey block that would take up the entire site between St Peters Road and Cambridge Grove Road currently occupied by National Europcar, a vehicle repair garage (Brown Autos Ltd), the vacant four-storey building formerly occupied by Warley & Warley Accountants and the long-demolished Duke Tavern public house. Originally, when the pub was closed over eight years ago, plans were approved for the development of a four-storey block of 18 flats with basement parking, but in February this year the Council granted permission for the current applicants to develop a five-storey 100-student block on the site.

At that time, the developers were encouraged by local councillors to consider acquiring the adjacent land and buildings including the garage, car rental yard and derelict offices, and submit proposals for a much larger scheme – which is why the Council's Development Control Committee will shortly be deciding whether to approve the taller, 300-student block with ground floor shopping, a café and communal recreational areas.

But they and the developers face mounting opposition from local residents groups who joined forces in March to organise a door-to-door petition against the scheme among residents on both the Cambridge Road and Cambridge Garden estates likely to be affected by the development. The resulting 150-signature petition was handed into the Guildhall in mid-April, where it is now being assessed by RBK officers together with a host of individual written objections.

Harry Hall, Chair of CRERA said: "We got a really positive response from both OneNorbiton and CREst members – as well as support from the nearby Norbiton Village Association – when we sought their help to jointly campaign against this development, and the vast majority of residents we canvassed expressed their opposition."

Objections from CRERA, CREst and OneNorbiton fall into four main categories:

- ➤ **SCALE:** The proposed scheme is considered too large and too high and, if it went ahead, it would overshadow the smaller flats' blocks on both the local housing estates, restricting natural light to existing homes and destroying sight lines.
- ➤ **INCREASED PARKING:** While the planning application is specifically for "car free student accommodation", opposition groups say many of the would-be students living in the block would want bring their own cars to the site and argue that it is blatantly naïve

for developers and the Council not to recognise the impact that scores more parked cars will have on the surrounding streets.

- ➤ **OVER POPULATION & INCREASED TRAFFIC:** Residents say the Cambridge Road area of Norbiton is already over-populated and an extra 300 student residents sandwiched in between the two large council estates would put huge pressure on already strained local community facilities. They also fear the additional traffic that would be generated on an already busy main road.

- ➤ **INCREASED RISK OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR:** Residents fear the prospect of 300 more teenage and young students living alongside estates that already experience anti-social behaviour. They say the scheme can only increase the risk of greater social problems – and are sceptical of assurances that the student block would be tightly controlled with no excessive noise or rowdyism.

Harry added: “Neither CRERA nor other local community groups voiced objections to the original plan for a smaller 100 student block but the new proposals are simply far too big for the area, and if the scheme goes ahead, we have no doubt it will soon lead to major problems with parking, noise, anti-social behaviour and too great a strain on local community resources.

“I’m sure the developers will claim that smart new student housing would be a big improvement on the existing street scene with its run-down buildings and waste land, but any new development needs to be in proportion with its surroundings and this huge structure would dominate the landscape, completely overshadowing existing flats’ blocks on both estates. It cannot be allowed to go ahead in its current form.”

At the time of going to press, the application is expected to be determined at the Council’s Development Control Committee meeting at 7.30pm on Wednesday 12th June, when residents and community groups plan to lobby & address the meeting. However this date is subject to confirmation and while we will try to keep all residents informed of this crucial event, please look out for notices and publicity about it, and do your best to come along and demonstrate your objections. This is our last real chance to halt this development and we need a strong show of force. Information will also be displayed on both the www.onenorbiton.org.uk and www.e-voice.org.uk/crest websites.

To read the whole of *The Cambridge* (May 2013 edition), the newsletter of Cambridge Road Estate Residents' Association, download the pdf file from the link below.

[CRERA May 2013\[1\]](#)