

Tooting Common Triangle Proposed development – Objection

I wish to strongly oppose the proposed development on the Tooting Common Triangle site, on the following grounds;

- 1) **Undesirable annexation and privatisation of common land:** The triangle site is currently free to access for all users, in keeping with the principle of common land. As such it is a vital resource for those in the area who do not have the resources that many others are lucky enough to enjoy, and is a financial and demographic leveller as a result.
- 2) **Transformation from a multi-use, inclusive area to a very selective, single use, non-inclusive space:** The fact that this is primarily aimed at large scale, commercial football usage only is no secret. This completely goes against way that the area, and particularly the hard court, have been used for the vast majority of their time in existence. The majority of the children in the area learned to ride their bikes on the hard court (including my own). People use it for exercise, cricket, and other ad hoc play. The beauty of the space is entirely that it is free to use, open for all, all the time, with no requirement that that use has to be to play organised football. There are plenty of other facilities given over to that very narrow use case that is club football.
- 3) **Loss of the hard court as the only land in this part of the common that does not badly flood:** Many months of the year see the triangle field itself (and often the playground also) rendered completely unusable due to flooding. The hard court is often the only area still just about viable for exercise in the vicinity, which is a winter lifeline for kids and adults alike. This flood risk has long been identified and documented by LB Wandsworth (local flood risk maps are easily available), and yet is being conveniently ignored here. The minimal flood mitigation proposed as part of this development is laughable and would seek (if it is even successful) primarily to protect the then commercial, closed site rather than addressing the wider issue.
- 4) **Commercial imperative driving the project:** It is very clear from the way that a commercial build has been rejected time and time again, based on strong local objection, and yet LB Wandsworth persist in returning to the proposal, that there is a commercial driver to the proposal. The hypocrisy of LBW stating that they are vehemently opposed to privatisation of certain common spaces on Clapham Common (sitting squarely within their electorate) and yet proposing an equally egregious commercial land grab on Tooting Common (bound, at it's Northern end here, by Lambeth residents) speaks volumes about what is really behind this project.
- 5) **Sharp practice during the planning and consultation periods:** Notices being placed on the common at short notice, during the initial hard lockdown period in March 2020, and primarily in areas not directly affected. Leaflets only dropped in letterboxes of houses in Wandsworth catchment (despite all the most affected houses falling under Lambeth jurisdiction). Again this speaks volumes about what the council's real motivation behind the project is. Several historic rejections and their dirty tactics are becoming more desperate.
- 6) **Loss, by wilful neglect, of the stay and play centre, again to be replaced by a commercial operation (a café):** This centre, when active, was an invaluable resource for many parents of young children, offering a safe, affordable, professionally managed space in which to stay and play, with a small but well maintained and dedicated playground and outside space in which babies and toddlers could play in safety. This has been allowed to close as part of a

wider strategy – there was no good structural / logistical reason to do so, and to state that it's current state of disrepair is a good reason for redevelopment is disingenuous at best and cynical at worst.

- 7) **Parking impact:** It is abundantly clear that parking has not been addressed at all in this proposal, save for some vague assurances from the de facto proposed primary tenants (a large football club) that they will 'encourage people to use public transport'. The fact that of the people who did lodge statements in support of the proposal, a large proportion were from out of borough (by quite considerable distances in some cases) makes it clear that cars will be parking in the surrounding streets regularly, and in unsustainable numbers.
- 8) **Other issues:** There are also other considerable impacts around light pollution, anti-social behaviour, impact on local bird and bat populations, loss of trees etc. All of which are simply being brushed aside in the name of commercial short term gain.

In summary, I feel that this proposal is unsuitable for the area, exclusive (in an era where we are increasingly trying to be inclusive), commercially driven (with a borough, and a controlling political party with a track record of making procurement and resourcing decisions very much in that spirit, regardless of what might be best for those they are meant to be serving), ill thought through, and has already been shown repeatedly not to be what the residents of the area actually want.

It is common land and should remain so. This creeping commercialisation only ever goes one way and this land would be lost to the general public forever if this commercial development were allowed to proceed.

I therefore strongly object.

Thanks and regards

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