

## PLANNING BOARD

6 October 2020

The Save Avery Hill campaign group has pursued three main aims since its inception in 2015:

- the first to save the Winter Garden and ensure that it has a sustainable future;
- the second to ensure that the Winter Garden and the Mansion House were linked up as an integrated whole for public access and community use;
- the third to ensure that the heritage assets were not harmed by the design of any building development.

The campaign group is pleased that the first aim will be realised if this application is approved. It has always been a major plank in the campaign's platform that the University of Greenwich should make a donation from the receipts of the sale towards the renovation and development of the Winter Garden. The leadership of the Council has pressed the university persuasively to this effect, and a significant sum is available to safeguard its future.

The second and third aims have been at the centre of our discussions with the applicant. We have had six intensive and constructive meetings from May to September, and I have to pay tribute to that team for the patience and receptiveness with which it has listened to and responded to our concerns. We were a long way apart at the first meeting, but we have narrowed the gap substantially over the course of our discussions.

We had three main areas of concern when we were first informed of the applicant's plans at the pre-application stage – design, transport and community use. In terms of design, the applicant made such appreciable improvements to the elevations that we concluded that the overall design was now satisfactory. In terms of transport, the applicant inserted stronger measures to control and deter parents and carers from dropping off and picking up on site. In terms of community use, the planning application which was submitted in July showed a much firmer and extensive commitment to public access and community use than originally offered.

The campaign group concluded in its response to the first consultation that it would be minded to support the application if a number of remaining points

could be given more detailed consideration. Most of these points were addressed in the second consultation in September on revised plans: the abandonment of the Bexley Road entrance; the extended use of heritage grade railings; and the increase in the number of public open days. This last point marks a real breakthrough, because it will be the first time that the public has guaranteed access to the Mansion site and its heritage treasures.

There are some issues which remain to be fully addressed and confirmed. Firstly, there is understandable concern about the impact of increased traffic on neighbouring residential streets. The campaign group supports the recommendation in section 14.31 that a school Travel Plan will be secured by condition, but asks members of the Planning Board to make it a further condition that the additional details outlined in section 14.32 are included in the Travel Plan, particularly specific measures to prevent parents and carers from utilising residential streets in the vicinity.

Secondly, in terms of the Community Use Agreement, we are pleased that the provisions of this will be secured through the s 106 agreement. We would ask members of the Planning Board to extend this agreement to include a binding obligation for Harris Academy to specify the management responsibilities mentioned in Section 23.1 and to develop joint working arrangements with the Royal Borough of Greenwich to maximise dual and combined use of the two elements of the heritage site. Such an arrangement would help to overcome and transcend the division in ownership that will now arise between the Winter Garden and the Mansion House.

It is the campaign group's view that there are substantial benefits to be gained from what is now proposed, both in heritage and community terms. We also believe that any disadvantages can be mitigated. We can then anticipate with optimism a future which carries forward for coming generations Nikolaus Pevsner's graphic image of the heritage site as 'amazingly sumptuous, the best survival in London of such Victorian extravaganzas'.

Therefore, given the provisions in the legal agreement, the conditions recommended in the officer's report and the confirmation of the additional conditions, the campaign group is content to give the application its support.