

Workings of LBWF Planning Committee

I feel it would be helpful if I outlined how the planning process works as there seemed a lot of confusion at our recent meeting. I have asked LBWF Planners if the GLA/Mayor will be involved as they are for normal large planning applications. I will let you know their response when I get it.

I am not aware of any different process to plan for hospitals than any other development so I will assume the hospital will go through the normal process. The fundamental purpose of the planning process is to manage land use. LBWF Local Plan consultation was about identifying future land uses. The hospital site was identified as suitable for a new hospital and housing.

The next stage comes when a developer identifies the site as one they want to develop. Barts have identified the need for a new hospital and where they want to build it. This gives them the opportunity to sell off the remaining land and use the money raised for health services. Behind the scenes it is vastly more complex as the Treasury and Health departments and other local authorities have an interest in the matter.

Negotiations in secret will have been going on between Barts and LBWF Planners and senior managers for some years. They become public when the developer i.e. Barts goes public with their plans and starts public consultation i.e. tell the public what they are planning. We have now reached that stage.

The next part of the process is for Barts to submit their plans and this is where it is getting confusing. They say they are submitting plans for full permission for a 500 storey car park, but as they have 1,200 existing places that makes no sense in planning terms. In addition they say the hospital plans will be Outline only which simply means - will the planners agree that a hospital of a particular size and density be acceptable on the chosen site? If they also submit plans for housing for the rest of the site how much work have they put in to ensure that is a feasible plan?

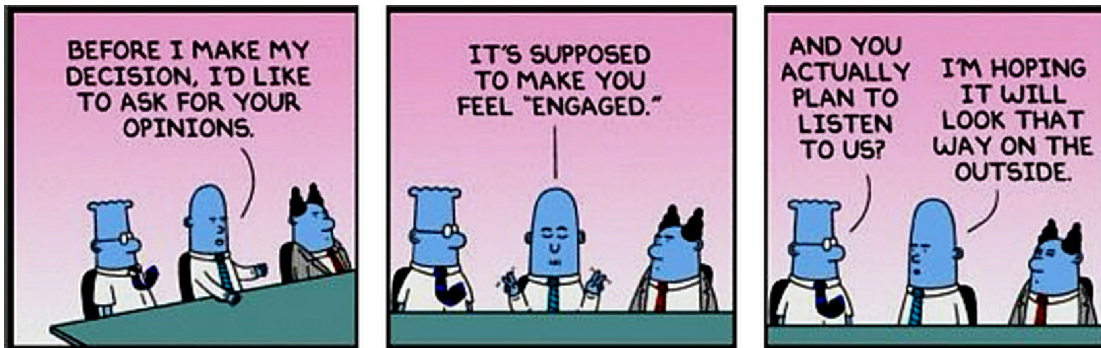
Assuming the LBWF gives outline permission Barts will have to come back at a later date to get full permission for the hospital when they have to provide a host of details and reports (The Town Centre application was over 200 files). Barts says the housing can't start until after the hospital is finished and then a developer will come forward with detailed plans for the housing and full permission will be sought..

If Barts are about to submit their outline plans the council's planning department will receive them and validate them (check all the information needed has been provided) and then register them on their Planning web site. This usually takes a few weeks for large applications. At that point the public have 21 to 30 days (varies according to the complexity of the development) to send in their objections. The council may also arrange a further public consultation. If the GLA are involved they produce their Stage 1 report commenting on the detail of the plans.

Some weeks later the developer gives a briefing to the Planning Committee, which recently has been online, so the public have been able to see the briefing. A few weeks later, once the planning officer has written a report, the date is set for the Planning Committee to make its decision which is based on the planner's recommendation in the report. The Planning

Committee meetings are usually once a month, but for developments the public show an interest in they can set up a special meeting just to discuss that development which will be the case for Whipps.

Because the committee is a legal body and they are expected to agree to the officer's report the battle is lost! If they go against the officer's report the developer can appeal and an expensive public inquiry could be called which no one wants! The Planning Committee is a rubber stamping process and they pretend to involve the public and you are allowed a 3 minutes slot to express your views, but unless you are a planning barrister you are unlikely to make any impression on the committee! This is where the democratic process for planning is failing.



Once LBWF's planning committee grants permission the Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy is negotiated with the developer and passed to the Mayor/GLA for the Stage 2 process when they have 2 weeks to Approve/Refuse or Call In. If it is approved the developer then has 3 years to make a start on the development before the approval runs out.

This is why it is important our views are taken notice of now as once the process starts it is unlikely to be rejected by the planners.

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