

KRA - Walnuts planning objection

The Knoll Residents Association (KRA) represents c.3,000 resident members (c.1,600 households) within the Knoll area of Orpington, which is adjacent to the High Street and the proposed Walnuts development.

We started consulting on this proposal with our residents in December 2020 when the initial plans were made by Aerli. We attended the various public consultations and webinars on behalf of our members. The KRA has had various meetings with residents on the subject, the most recent being in January 2022 after the plans were submitted to Bromley council. In the same month we also conducted a resident poll online which at the time of this submission had 159 responses with the following outcome:

- 82% oppose the walnuts planning submission
- 16% support the walnuts planning submission
- 2% are currently undecided.

We exist to represent our resident members views and are therefore objecting to this proposal based on the direct resident feedback received.

The Knoll residents care passionately about the success of the High Street area and benefit from the retail, food, entertainment, leisure and health services offered.

Most residents acknowledge that the Walnuts shopping center and leisure complex is in need of refurbishment or replacement. Many residents also recognise that there is a housing shortage and Orpington (like other areas of London) will need to build new homes. We also understand that the High Street needs to adapt to changing societal and community needs. It has struggled in recent years to attract and retain a comprehensive retail offering, for example.

Many residents will acknowledge that some form of sympathetic residential development could help revitalise the High Street area by bringing additional investment and resident purchasing power. However, we do not believe this proposal is acceptable for the following reasons:

1. The massing, scale and layout of the proposal is out of character with the surrounding suburban area - contrary to Policy 47 of the Bromley Local Plan.

Orpington High Street sits within an established suburban area and the erection of 15 residential tower blocks, two of which being 20 storeys (60 metres in height) would significantly alter the local character. The development would negatively impact the townscape as it is significantly out of scale, height and massing to the neighbouring buildings both within the Walnuts area but also the High Street and Knoll area. This proposal contains buildings that are more than twice the height deemed appropriate in the draft Orpington Town Centre Supplementary Planning document; section 6.4 highlighted below:

“Taking into account the local context, which is characterised by low-rise development, the council considers that higher density development, predominately 3 to 9 storeys would be appropriate in this location”.

2. The development would diminish the quality, vista and skyline of ‘view of local importance’ - contrary to Policy 48 of the Bromley Local Plan.

The local plan highlights the view east over Kent from Crofton Road, north east towards Orpington High street as a view of local importance. Many Knoll residents treasure this view whether it is enjoyed from their house, garden or from the many streets that look upon this vista. This development would be a significant intrusion to townscape foreground that would be seen by Knoll residents daily.

3. Loss of amenity and privacy for Knoll residents - Contrary to Policy 37 of the Bromley Town Plan

The proposed height of these buildings do not respect the amenity and privacy of Knoll residents, particularly in the roads nearest to the development (Broomhill Road, Vinson

Close, Knoll rise, Oatfield Road, Stanley Road, Cyril Road) who will suffer considerable overlooking from the tallest towers.

4. The development does not preserve the special character identified in the adjacent Priory and Broomhill Conservation areas - Contrary to Policy 42 and 45 Bromley Local Plan and section 3.24 in the Orpington Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document.

The Broomhill conservation area, situated in the Knoll, includes five locally listed buildings and a public common. Computer simulated designs of the proposed development show that the vista from this historically valued site would be significantly impacted. Additionally, the adjacent Priory Conservation area which contains the boroughs oldest building, The Priory, would be dwarfed by the development. Forever impacting the character of this historically significant area.

5. The community will not have access to the Walnuts Leisure Centre for up to five years and the facilities in the plan are inadequate - contrary to Policy 20 in Bromley Local Plan

Many Knoll residents rely on the leisure centre for their health and wellbeing. It would not be acceptable to have this facility removed for any length of time. There has been no offer of a suitable alternative for residents during the closure. The existing leisure centre enjoys a 33 metre pool and good sized training pool. The proposed training pool is more akin to a splash pool with no spectator seating. That would not be suitable for children's lessons, which means the main pool would have to be used instead. We understand it is very difficult to design a pool for both the needs of children and competitive swimmers. E.g. children need a shallow end, but that would not allow competitive swimmers to complete an under water turn. The current designs would result in a permanent loss of a valued community feature for residents and competitive swimmers.

6. There is insufficient parking proposed - contrary to policy 30 of the Bromley Local Plan

Bromley has one of the highest car ownership levels in London at 1.2 per household and the Bromley local plan requires a minimum of 0.7 car parking spaces per property (1-2 beds). This proposal is only offering half that provision with 0.35 car parking spaces (350 spaces for 990 dwellings) per dwelling. This will result in parking overspill into the Knoll area from the new residents and their visitors. The Knoll already suffers from inconsiderate parking

(across drives or double parking) which would undoubtedly get worse.

7. Negative impact on local infrastructure - health care, schools and transport.

It has been estimated that an additional 2-3 thousand people would inhabit the proposed development putting severe strain on existing key services. We do not believe the infrastructure fee payable by the developers would sufficiently cover the cost of increasing capacity across three key areas:

Health care: Residents already report difficulty in getting timely access to their GP and our local health care trust, Kings College Hospital Trust, at the time of writing, is missing all its key targets on ambulance queues, A&E and bed waiting times.

Schools: It is unlikely the infrastructure fee would provide for a new primary and secondary school which would therefore put significant strain onto existing school class sizes. This would impact the quality of learning for all local pupils.

Transport: The roads around the High Street are already congested at certain times of the day and residents commuting to London report overcrowded trains. It would require significant investment to upgrade local transport. Again, the infrastructure levy is not sufficient to address these issues.