

ST HELENS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

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Sir Keith O’Nions
President and Rector
Imperial College
(sent by email)

Dear Sir Keith,

12th February 2013

Financing of Imperial West development and HEFCE grant

We wrote to Dame Manningham Buller on the above on December 17th, with a copy to Jeremy Newsum, and have followed up twice with John Anderson. We have separately written to the College Secretary about the College’s response to a FOI request on the same subject. There have been no substantive replies.

We are now writing to you in the hope and expectation of receiving a response to the questions we have raised. The matter is urgent, as it has relevance to a potential Judicial Review application which this association is pursuing against Hammersmith & Fulham Council, challenging the council’s decision of December 21st 2012 to issue a planning permission for Phase 2 of the Imperial West development.

As set out in the letter to Dame Manningham Buller, the College made statements in its grant application to HEFCE which are in conflict with what was reported to councillors when they approved the Phase 2 planning application for the development. The committee were told that *‘officers are satisfied that the applicant will continue on from Phase 1 and fully implement any planning consent for Phase 2’*. Whereas HEFCE were told that *‘Without this contribution the College would be forced to postpone development of the Imperial West Technology Campus until the remaining funding required were to become available’*. There was no mention of the College either needing, or applying for, additional government grant for the project at the time of the committee decision on the planning application.

These differing statements above are critical to the council’s assessment of the financial viability of the overall scheme, a matter which in turn is critical to the legal question of whether the council has properly applied its own policies on affordable housing as part of the development.

Is the College going to provide clear and accurate answers to the questions that we have raised? Or is it intending to prevaricate in the hope of delaying matters beyond the 3 month timescale for a judicial review application of the council’s issuing of the planning application?

Copies of our letters to Dame Eliza and to the College Secretary are attached. We note that the College is holding a 'Launching the Vision' event on Imperial West on 6th March, to which various local organisations (but not ourselves) have been invited. We would not expect to be invited, given the fact that our relationship with the college has become increasingly adversarial. As we said when we met with Jeremy Newsum many months ago, we support much of what the College is seeking to do on the imperial West site. But we believe the planning and execution of the development (to date) to have been dominated by commercial considerations (and relationships) which are not appropriate to the College's overall mission and which will do serious damage to this part of inner west London.

Moreover, the College has never been willing to be open and transparent about the funding of the project. The discrepancies between what the College has said to HEFCE and to Hammersmith & Fulham (coupled with the College's apparent unwillingness to explain these) are once again lowering the College's reputation.

We look for an early response from the College, before we take further steps to make these issues public and to pursue them through the courts.

Regards,

Henry Peterson
Chair St Helens Residents Association

Copies to
Baroness Manningham Buller
Jeremy Newsum, Imperial College
John Anderson, Imperial College
Cllr Alex Chalk, LBHF
Cllr Mike Cartwright LBHF