

Resident Statement for LBBB Planning Committee 22.03.2020 / App No: 20/02517/FULL  
Development Description: Replacement of the existing external timber cladding with fibre cement boards to 231 existing properties within stage 1 of Barking Riverside.

I believe the proposals in this application are not appropriate for the following reasons:

1. The traditional shiplap cladding is not suitable for the contemporary building typologies. Although this is more successful in the vertical orientation.
2. The proposed colour does not offer enough contrast to the existing grey brickwork. A darker colour would be more successful.
3. The existing cladding battens are about 40mm square. They are also spaced about 40mm apart. This design provides variety and depth on our facades throughout the day that is both interesting and attractive. The shiplap cladding provides a 15mm overhang at 150mm centres. This results in a façade that looks flat and lacks the visual qualities of the current scheme. This is enhanced by the issues with contrast previously noted.
4. The existing gates to the pilot home on Gatward Place were transparent. The proposal is to make these gates solid which is not in accordance with the images in the planning application. This proposal will remove much needed surveillance from our streets and should be considered a safety risk.
5. Interface details have not been thought through and this is apparent in the pilot homes.

As a material, I think the proposed product is a possible cladding replacement if applied in an appropriate way. This can be achieved as demonstrated on the HardiePlank website through the Abode Housing Scheme in Cambridge, where the vertical elements are very similar to the existing cladding design at Barking Riverside Phase 1. I encourage the applicant to consider this instead of the proposed shiplap cladding that is proving unsuccessful through the completed pilot homes.

In Health and Safety terms, the fire in 2019 was a “near miss”. But appropriate reactions have not yet been made. Why have necessary applications to temporarily remove the timber cladding not been made? This would have allowed appropriate time and consultation for this planning process.

This application contains proposals that will irreversibly change the appearance of my home, the street-scene and townscape. Please refer this application to the borough’s Quality Review Panel so it can be independently assessed under their aim to “improve the quality of buildings and places for the benefit of the public”.

The planning officer informed me that he would feel the responsibility of someone’s life if he rejected these proposals and a fire claimed a victim the following day. Is this really where the responsibility would sit? If not, I feel the recommendation for approval has been made whilst under duress.

Today, and like residents previously, the planning committee are unfairly being offered a decision to either, improve the safety of our homes whilst sacrificing the quality, or to retain the quality with a known fire risk. This is not the purpose of the planning process and I urge you to make your decision based on the negative impact this application will have on our award winning neighbourhood.

I bought my property because of its design and I am proud to call Barking Riverside home. The quality of this proposal will change that. I know I am not alone with this thought.

I was introduced to Barking by Councillor Rodwell through the very successful Open House London walks over 7 years ago. His passion, enthusiasm and vision for Barking was contagious and he helped me make my decision on where to live. Councillor Rodwell, where do these proposals sit within your vision for Barking?