

Sandy Lane Site Action Group

"Standing up to the Developers"

RIVERS OF POO

Thursday 7th June 2007

Residents of Hampton Wick and Teddington have good reason to be nervous about the Linden Homes development on the ex-Seeboard site in Sandy Lane. Once the site is occupied, a heavy storm would result in sewerage flooding down Sandy Lane and the High Street in Hampton Wick, according to information submitted by Thames Water to Richmond Council.

Thames Water's conclusions are in the November 2005 Richmond planning committee report on Linden Homes' application to build 198 apartments on the site. Thames Water's modelling study found that the foul sewerage system in Sandy Lane was currently at its design capacity and could not cope with the additional flows from the development without significant reinforcement.

The study predicted that if the development discharged into the existing sewer network, flooding would occur in a one in 15 year storm from two separate manholes in Sandy Lane and High Street, Hampton Wick, "which may be a risk to public health, the environment and the amenity of the area". Thames Water will not have the funding to upgrade the sewer system until 2010, and the improvements needed to cope with Linden Homes' development are unlikely to be in place before 2012-13.

Just before the November 2005 planning committee meeting, Thames Water and Linden Homes reached a 'solution': a pumping station would be built on the site to discharge the excrement from the 198 apartments to the foul sewer in Bushy Park Road. Bushy Park Road residents were not told about this.

Events over the past few months have added to residents' concerns, although the finger of doom is once more pointing at Sandy Lane and Hampton Wick, rather than Bushy Park Road.

Linden Homes has decided that 198 apartments is not enough and intends to file an application to cram in another 40. Since half of these are three-bedroom flats, this could mean more than 100 extra people on the site putting even more pressure on the sewerage infrastructure.

And Thames Water has now decided that their study was wrong, according to Linden Homes, and that the existing Sandy Lane sewer can cope after all. This has surprised everyone.

“The residents of Hampton Wick and Teddington will have to pray that Thames Water is right, because if they’ve got it wrong the consequences will be horrible”, said David Harnden, chairman of the Sandy Lane Site Action Group. “We don’t know how much thought Thames Water has put into this or why they suddenly changed their minds – Linden Homes promised in mid-April to send us the relevant documents, but so far we’ve received nothing.”

“We also have serious doubts about Thames Water’s ability to predict the weather. They talk about a one in 15 year storm, but with the more extreme weather conditions of the past few years violent storms could happen far more frequently. Given the importance of getting this right, we think outside experts should investigate the capacity of the existing sewerage system and the impact of severe weather.”

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