

BROOMHILL ACTION AND NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUP

Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Appeals by Miller Homes Ltd and Escafeld Estates Ltd
Land at Crookes Road and Taptonville Road, Sheffield S10 2AZ
Appeal numbers: APP/J4423/E/08/2061372/NWF and
APP/J4423/A/08/2061375/NWF

BANG Opening Statement

BANG is a long-standing community association, governed by a written constitution. The aims of BANG, enshrined in that constitution, relate directly to the case that we will be making against this appeal. They are:

- To promote high standards of planning and architecture in Broomhill;
- To educate the public on the geography, history, natural history and architecture of Broomhill
- To secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest in Broomhill.

BANG is opposed to this proposed development because we are convinced that it will greatly damage the character and appearance of our conservation area. We cannot claim to be 'objective and impartial' on this matter since we live in Broomhill, and we love where we live. But we do claim to *know* the Broomhill Conservation Area better than any of the external experts here, and our association's history group is widely recognised to possess the definitive body of knowledge on Broomhill's origins, its evolution and its cultural contribution to the City.

Our conviction that this development would damage the conservation area is not simply the view of a few individuals but represents a significant body of local opinion. This is evidenced by the large number of residents who wrote letters of objection to the planning applications, by the petition we presented to the council, and by the enthusiastic local support for our campaign to 'Save the Secret Garden', visible through attendance at our monthly public meetings, website hits, donations etc. As a democratic and accountable organisation we could not be presenting this case without that solid support from our local community.

During the evolution of this development we attended a number of meetings with the developer and invited to comment on aspects of the design proposals. However we were not consulted at the outset about the overall vision for the future of the site and our attempts to re-open discussion on that vision have not been successful. Nevertheless, we have done our best to maintain good relations with the developer and to contribute constructively within the limited scope allowed.

It is important to emphasise that we are not a group of NIMBYs seeking to prevent any new development in our area. In fact, we have always made it plain that we would welcome the redevelopment of the student halls of residence on the northern

part of this site for housing, provided that the new estate is sympathetic to its surroundings. Nor are we opposing the conversion of Tapton Elms into apartments, even though we think it regrettable. But we are totally opposed to the development proposals relating to the southern part of the site and our case will focus principally on that part of the scheme. We will present three major arguments as to why we consider the proposals relating to the southern part of this site to be unacceptable.

Our first argument is that the development conflicts with local planning policy for the historic environment, specifically in the case of Broomhill, with the need to protect the 'outstanding historic ambience' of Taptonville Road and Taptonville Crescent. Our evidence explains the historical development of Taptonville Road as a coherent streetscape that was designed as the setting for Tapton Elms, and argues that it is the *assemblage* of buildings *and* spaces that now gives it its special character. Hence to protect the historic ambience of the area we argued that it is important that Tapton Elms is not marginalised and subordinated within the streetscape by the new development.

Our second argument is that the green open space of the Botanic Garden is highly valued by local residents, not just those that live on the site and have free access to it, but also by the residents of the surrounding area whose physical access to its interior has been more limited. The views of the magnificent trees, the birds, bats and other wildlife, the tranquillity and sense of space that come from proximity to a sizeable undeveloped site rich in natural history all benefit the local community. Given the large number of objections made to the planning applications with regard to ecology, biodiversity and open space issues, we were disappointed that they were not included in the reasons for refusal of the application. We are grateful for the opportunity to bring these matters before the inquiry as Rule 6 participants.

Our third argument is that the gardens of Tapton Elms, Pisgah House and Taptonville Crescent are an important historic garden composite that should be protected, conserved and handed on to future generations. The landform of these gardens predates the Victorian suburb and has survived to form key spatial elements in John Hobson's design vision for Taptonville. The presence of the gardens still allows that design vision to be comprehended and appreciated from the street. We will be calling Joan Sewell, a leading expert on Sheffield's historic parks and gardens, to present evidence to the inquiry on this issue.

Finally I would like to say that shortly before submitting our evidence we were astonished to learn that a parallel near-identical planning application for this site had been submitted by the appellants to the City Council and was going through the local planning process at the same time as this appeal is being considered. Yesterday it was agreed that it is this second parallel scheme that will now be decided by this inquiry. However we were also told that some of the drawings that we were sent six weeks ago for this second application had been incorrect, and new versions, that were significantly different, were laid on the table only yesterday. We would like it to be noted that we feel that this has compromised the opportunity of local residents to evaluate and comment on the proposals now under consideration.