



Fw: URGENT: Serious misrepresentations in URA application A /H3/435

17/05/2017 16:56

From: cwdcadm <cwdcadm@cwdc.had.gov.hk>
To:

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From: [REDACTED]
To: cwdcadm@cwdc.had.gov.hk, cwdcadm@cwdc.had.gov.hk
Date: 2017/05/17 16:44:48
Subject: Fwd: URGENT: Serious misrepresentations in URA application A/H3/435

Dear Chairman and Members of Central & Western District Council,

Re: Serious misrepresentations in URA application A/H3/435/ Objection to URA's H19 redevelopment

The Central & Western Concern Group would like to bring to the Council's attention of the serious misrepresentations in the Urban Renewal Authority's latest Section 16 application (A/H3/435).

Below is a letter issued by the Concern Group to the Director of Planning on 4 May 2017. A formal complaint on this subject had also been made to the Legislative Council Public Complaints Office.

We strongly request the Central & Western District Council to object to this application and to ask the Town Planning Board to reject this application.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Best regards,
Katty Law
Central & Western Concern Group

Dear Mr Raymond Lee (Director of Planning), Mr JJ Austin (Senior Town Planner/HK),

The Central & Western Concern Group would like to bring to your immediate and urgent attention of the serious misrepresentations in the Urban Renewal Authority's latest Section 16 application (A/H3/435) now published by the Planning Department for public consultation.

The URA made a number of serious misrepresentations:

1. Condition of the buildings: In its Planning Statement 1.5.3, the URA described "the physical building condition and general built environment of Site B is found to be in a very poor and dilapidated and decaying condition". However, the URA did not mention that, in fact, there are blocks of tenement buildings in Site B which are well renovated by their owners for current use. These include No. 8 Wa In Fong East and No. 2A Shing Wong Street. No. 2 Shing Wong Street is owned by the URA and is currently used by an NGO. There are also a number of tenement buildings which received Buildings Department's repair orders and have completed their repairs or in the process of doing so. These include buildings on Wa In Fong West and Nos. 88-90 Staunton Street. In Site C, a good number of tenement buildings have been renovated by their owners and are in good condition. Without stating these facts, the URA is misleading the public and the Planning Department about the general condition of the buildings in the area. This is unacceptable.

2. Nos. 88-90 Staunton Street: In its Planning Statement 4.1.10.1a the URA stated that most of the building's architectural features including external facade features, French windows, curved balconies "have been demolished by the owner as part of the renovation works". This is factually incorrect - on site inspection, the building's external facade features remain largely unchanged (photo 1), the curved balconies at the back are still there (photo 2) and many of the original wooden windows remain intact and have been painted white (photo 1). The owner did take down some illegal structures (metal balconies in front)

and reduce the height of a few windows (probably a requirement by Buildings Department) but there is no big change to the building. By this serious misrepresentation, the URA is misleading the public and the Planning Department while giving itself an excuse to demolish the building which it promised to preserve in the 2013 Approved Scheme.

3. District Council's position: In its Planning Statement 1.5.3, the URA stated "This urban decay and the continued blight are also a grave concern of the Central and Western District Council (C&WDC) which has urged the URA to expedite the redevelopment". The fact is: On 16 March 2017 the Central & Western District Council unanimously passed a motion which stated as follows:

"The C&WDC strongly opposes the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) for unilaterally increasing the total plot ratio of Sites B and C of the Staunton Street/Wing Lee Street project from the original 4.76 without adequate public consultation. The C&WDC also urges the Town Planning Board to refuse the URA's application so as to preserve the existing community ambience of H19. Should its application be refused, the URA should also give up the H19 redevelopment project to allow complete preservation of the distinctive architectural complex by the property owners. "

A link to this document can be found here (see the amended motion which was adopted after voting):

http://www.districtcouncils.gov.hk/central/doc/2016_2019/en/dc_meetings_doc/11738/20170316_DC_Paper_35_2017_Motion_Result.pdf

In fact the DC had expressed objection to this new scheme over a couple of DC meetings prior to 16 March 2017. URA representatives had attended all these DC meetings and were well-informed of the Council's view and decision. Yet the URA did not report this important DC view in its application. This is plain misrepresentation and deliberate evasion to mislead the public and the Planning Department.

A planning application full of misrepresentations and distortions as such cannot be regarded as a proper document for public consultation. We urgently request Planning Department to demand the URA to withdraw this application and the case be subjected to departmental investigation. The Planning Department would be held responsible if this flawed document is allowed to mislead the public.

This complaint case will also be taken to the Ombudsman and the Legislative Council in view of URA's violation of public accountability and truthful representation. We reserve the right for legal action in case this factually-wrong and distorted document is accepted for public consultation.

We respectfully ask the Director of Planning and Senior Town Planner to deal with this situation urgently and as soon as possible. Kindly give us a prompt reply by Friday (5 May 2017) and let us know your decision.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Best regards,
Katty Law
Central & Western Concern Group
Contact number:

