

Councillor Bruce McDonald
Elmbridge Borough Council
(by email)

12 September 2023

Dear Councillor McDonald,

On 30 August you met representatives of the group Claygate Can Do Better (CCDB) to discuss their concerns about the EBC proposal to sign an agreement with developers to build a large Marks and Spencer retail outlet on the site of Torrington Lodge Car Park. After that meeting this appeared on the CCDB website:

“The leader of EBC (who is a Claygate ward councillor) believed the Parish Council 21st July meeting should never have happened, in his view it was inexcusable!”

We have waited nearly two weeks for you to either deny that you said these words, or to explain them, or to apologise for them. We have seen nothing to this effect. We therefore assume that these words represent your views.

As you know, when in late June EBC first made public its negotiations with Kilo Properties Ltd, which were then at an advanced stage, there had been no meaningful consultation with Claygate residents to ascertain their views on such a project. It was not suggested that such a consultation was planned, nor did it take place. The Parish Council thought it essential to allow Claygate residents to state their views, and this was why we arranged the meeting on Friday 21st July. Before that meeting, although it was known that there was some vocal opposition to the proposal, it was not clear how widespread this might be. By the end of the meeting, it was clear that the almost unanimous view of those attending was that the proposal was objectionable because it was thought to be unnecessary, harmful to existing Claygate businesses, likely to have a detrimental effect on traffic and parking, and visually wholly incompatible with the village character.

In what way was this meeting “inexcusable”? Why should it “never have happened”? We can see that it might be embarrassing to EBC to discover these views at this late stage of its negotiations; that of course is the result of the total lack of consultation. We think it would have indeed been inexcusable for the Parish Council *not* to have sought the views of Claygate residents as soon as it was aware of the proposal.

We look forward to receiving your comments.

This letter is copied to Adam Chalmers.

(Signed)

Donna Holt, Vice-Chair, Claygate Parish Council
Gil Bray, Councillor
Michael Collon, Councillor
Tim Freeborn, Councillor
Geoff Herbert, Councillor
Hadleigh Moon, Councillor