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Southwark News  
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For Publication

Dear Sir/Madam

**There is no loophole in the council's new rule**

Southwark Council faces a test of Cllr Mark Williams' insistence that 'there is no loophole' in the council's new rules for making viability assessments public (letters 14 April 2016). Two viability assessments have been submitted for the demolition and redevelopment of Skipton House at the Elephant and Castle under 'private and confidential' cover and neither has been made public.

Major developer London and Regional Properties Ltd (L&R) submitted its planning application, including a viability assessment on 18 Dec 2015, while the new transparency rules were being drafted. L&R then submitted a revised application on 14 March 2016, with a viability assessment to follow. Southwark adopted the new rules on 15 March.

It is the usual practice in planning matters to apply policies that are in draft form to planning applications. Southwark Council's affordable housing policy has been in draft since 2011 and is routinely referred to when planning applications are considered. There should therefore be no argument about applying the transparency rules in this case and revealing the assessments, particularly if Southwark received the second viability assessment after 15 March 2016.

There will be zero affordable housing in this development. The best that developers L&R can come up with is an 'offer' to build 15% affordable housing elsewhere, or to make a payment to do so. This is a fraction of the 35% that local policy requires and should be rejected by Southwark out of hand. We need all the affordable housing we can get and we need it at the Elephant.

L&R are using the secret viability assessments to justify their pitiful offer, but there has been no decision on this application yet, so there is still time to make the viability assessments public, so we can all see why we're losing so much affordable housing.

Over to you, Cllr Williams...

Jerry Flynn  
(Elephant Amenity Network/35% campaign)