

Dear Mr Browning

Further to the email to me from Victoria French copied to yourself I am writing immediately to you to lodge a formal objection to the planning application involving the siting of the big wheel at the forthcoming illuminations.

In view of the three-day deadline of which Victoria has just informed me, together with the date of the relevant committee which, by reason of short notice and a prior engagement I cannot attend, and the fact that, though we are residents directly across the road from the big wheel, we have had no notice of or involvement in the so-called consultation whatsoever, we have no alternative but to lodge a formal objection without delay.

Our objection is both to the substance of the application with regard to the siting of the big wheel and the inadequate process followed by the council with regard to residents directly affected such as ourselves.

It is in our view inadequate and disingenuous for the council to hide behind whatever may be minimum consultation requirements when the effect on residents is direct, protracted, intrusive and unreasonable and those residents are not even informed or consulted. You must be aware, and the committee must be made aware, that the big wheel gives people using it direct and unimpeded sight into our living rooms and bedrooms for over four weeks, which is intolerable.

Let us deal with the process first. You must know that my complaint to the ombudsman has just resulted in a finding of maladministration against the council as being in breach of planning regulations previously, including with regard to the big wheel. The ombudsman directed that the council seek planning permission accordingly and, as I was clear to the ombudsman that this should be done genuinely and properly by the council, especially in view of its previous history of failure to comply, we certainly did not expect a minimum approach which explicitly and directly excludes immediate residents.

It goes without saying that a council that cannot even give itself planning permission properly in regard to one of its major projects has big questions to answer. It also goes without saying that the consequences of an accident, whether Grenfell Tower-style or otherwise, in circumstances where Members and Senior Officers have failed to get and demonstrate planning permission, do not bear thinking about, both politically and in terms of corporate manslaughter.

We have no alternative, in the circumstances, but to refer the matter back to the ombudsman either (as she may determine) as part of the ombudsman's review of the adequacy of the council's response to our original complaint or as a new formal complaint. We shall do that without delay.

The process aspect of this formal objection to the council is fundamental in our view, since it goes to the heart of the issue of whether the council is behaving reasonably, particularly in the light of the proximity of the big wheel to residents, the lack of consultation with residents and the impossibility of residents such as ourselves having sufficient time now to submit a detailed objection or attend the meeting in question, and the maladministration which the ombudsman has already found on this very issue as well as the assurances which she was given by the council's chief executive that proper remedial action would be taken.

But the substance is important too. We believe that the big wheel is a monstrous thing which should not be in the same place every year, every year affecting the same residents in terms of our inconvenience and privacy. We also believe that its situation is dangerous as it is far too near the road and both its motor and pedestrian traffic, at a time of year subject to coastal gales, if it should topple over.

There is indeed much more to be said but the important thing is to lodge this formal objection, and a formal complaint to the ombudsman, without delay in view of the shortage of time and the council's clear intention to press ahead on the basis of minimal legality and minimum consultation unless we can thus secure some means of intervention.

We would be grateful for an immediate acknowledgement of this formal objection and confirmation that it will be fully and properly taken forward