

Councillor Welsh has asked that his entire address at the Forum be circulated.

Cr Welsh stated that he stood for Council to rationalize the Doncaster Hill High density strategy. He believed that Manningham Council had disregarded basic principles by proposing “top down planning” - conducting studies on how best the area could cope with the high density development rather than establishing what our city’s infrastructure could sustain.

He referred to the independent panel’s report that identified the steep narrow streets of the area as a “physical impediment to walking and cycling” – two important elements in the efficient function of any activity centre - factors in minimising car use and their effective role in easing parking pressures.

He cited the parking shortfall of 5,100 parking bays that had been identified by councils own consultants GTA- and the fact that parking rates for developments had not varied to those that existed while the report was being compiled nor had the rates differed in projects approved after the tabling of the report’s finding. He declared he was at a loss to understand why Council had recently announced that they had decided not to accept the advice of GTA who had recommended the installation of six parking stations to accommodate the parking shortfall.

Cr Welsh expressed his concern and disappointment that there had been no investigation into the viability of the Doncaster Hill High Rise Strategy, evidenced by all the many presale failures that have ensued and the fact there had not been one main road apartment development erected since Manningham Council formally adopted the strategy. He cited a recent permit approval on a prime site development where it was proposed that 70% of the high rise tower was to be one bedroom apartments ranging in size from 39.6m² to 50m² (4.25 squares to 5.5 squares)- known in the industry as “gun barrel” apartments with no bedroom window. He identified the huge building costs involved in complying with the planning schemes mandatory heights and prescriptive controls as a factor in the need for developers to maximize the number of units to make the developments viable. He referred to some critics in the building industry who had suggested that a medium density (four to five storeys) could have been more appropriate since they are up to 40% cheaper to construct and might have allowed developers to produce larger, more acceptable and competitively price units. He stressed that the current purchase price of a local established property or town house on a cost per m² basis was half that of most high rise apartments.

He spoke of his fears that this type of cramped living combined with the large number of high rise apartments concentrated in such a limited area might create a ghetto like environment. He said it was well documented that the pride and perception of ownership diminishes as over populated development increases

He suggested that neighbouring Box Hill might support an activity scheme as it has a far superior infrastructure to Doncaster with efficient public transport in Bus, Train and Tram, its flat wide streets, Tafe College and world class Hospital.

Cr Welsh was critical of the manner in which community consultation was conducted and that to him it was obvious, from the feed back, that a greater percentage of residents were either not aware of the strategy or were not supportive.