

WOKINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Comments on Reserved Matters Planning Application 150093 (Matthews Green Farm)

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Wokingham Town Council is generally supportive of this application and recognises the need for additional housing in the borough and the inclusion of affordable properties within the plan.

However some area of apartments & 3 story town houses are of a scale, mass & built form which do not integrate or relate well to the existing established residential development nearby or the remainder of the proposed development.

Both the town houses and apartment blocks should be reduced in height by one story. The apartment blocks should be reduced in size to a scale no larger than the proposed size of two semi-detached houses and dispersed through the development.

Before the committee considers granting this application in its present form, Wokingham Town Council would request that Borough Councillors visit both Montague Park and the affordable housing area of Mulberry Grove. In both cases the built structure well represents the concerns of the Town Council.

Supporting Regulations and recommendations

Core Strategy Policy CP3 - General Principles for development

a) Are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life;

f) Contribute to a sense of place in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings (especially existing dwellings) including the use of appropriate landscaping;

Wokingham Borough Design Guide Sections 4 (Residential) and 5 (Streets & Spaces)

This seeks to ensure development is of a high standard of design that can integrate with the character of the area is also important to achieving sustainable development in the borough. The provision of public and private amenity space contributes to the character of the borough. All development can impact on the overall character of the area. Consequently, it is vital that the Council minimises any adverse impacts.

R9) The height of residential buildings should respond to a number of factors:

- the prevailing heights and degree of variation in height in the local context
- the scale and importance of the space that the building will define or enclose
- its position in the street hierarchy
- the position of the building line in relation to the street (ie how far back the building is set from the street frontage
- whether it is a potential landmark location

Buildings proposed to be taller than their surroundings, that is their neighbours or the prevailing heights in the local area, must be of exceptional design quality.

R10) The assessment of an appropriate density must be design-led as well as considering the number of units per hectare, to ensure that development relates well to local character. This includes:

- the height, bulk and massing of buildings

- the space around and gaps between them
- the space required for parking

R15) Buildings must be designed to provide reasonable levels of visual privacy to habitable rooms. This has not been achieved in:

- Block of Flats Plots 1 - 12
- 3 Story Town Houses Plots 25 – 80

S6) The street network must be well connected into the surrounding area to create safe, convenient and attractive links to neighbouring areas and to local destinations, for pedestrians and cyclists in particular. Local destinations include: schools, local shops and other services, public transport stops and open spaces.

SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS

Block of Flats – Plots 1 - 12

With reference to the proposed apartments detailed as Plots 1 – 12, which having examined the detailed elevation plans is in effect a 4 story structure (as shown in the relevant plan) due to ground elevations on the site, the Town Council does not believe that the structure complies with the requirements of the Wokingham Strategic Plan, seeing alarming similarities with the existing Molly Millars development. Reference R9 and R10.

The block containing Plots 1-12 has no real design qualities as required under the NPPF, nor Private Amenity space as required by local policies and will form an overbearing impact when viewed from Matthews Green Road due to its scale and mass.

In addition consideration needs to be given to the planning officer's observations regarding the granting of the Outline Planning permission which from the plans submitted with this application are incorrect.

The relevant statement is as follows:-

21) Overall the indicative layout shows the site will comprise primarily family housing with some flats. ***The majority of the site will comprise two storey buildings but within key vistas, adjacent the NDR and local centre, could contain taller three storey buildings.*** This reflects the character of the wider area and Wokingham in general. The proposed location of the school, community facilities and local neighbourhood centre would be well linked to the surrounding areas to enable local residents to easily walk to them and allow the facilities to benefit from each other. It is considered that the proposed land use parcels, location and distribution of the amenity areas and building heights all appear broadly acceptable.

The three storey buildings in the submitted plan are clearly not as described above.

Flooding and the Balancing pond

This is still a major concern for the Town Council. Regarding this application together with application 150036 with contains further details of the balancing pond, maximum and minimum water levels are indicated but no mention of depths. If the maximum level is reached what happens to any further water requiring storage? When the water level is being maintained at the minimum level such as in hot weather, what stops the stagnant pond of water becoming bogged down with algae, smelly, fly infested and a health risk? This has happened elsewhere in the borough with balancing ponds and due to proximity of the proposed pond to habitable accommodation is a potential source of major future problems. A maintained flow of water through the pond would be needed to mitigate this risk.

How deep is this pond? No indication of any measures to protect children playing in the area of the affordable housing from a risk of drowning?

Footways

It would appear from the plans that a large number of none dual use areas of the highway are lacking pedestrian footways. This appears to be contrary to the Borough Design Guide and CP3 section b) which requires amongst others a safe scheme. Having no pavements outside properties is inherently dangerous especially for the old, infirm and children. Also CP6 requires Pedestrian Routes within the site to connect safely with places that people want to go.

Cycle Routes

There appears to be no provision for safe cycle routes in the direction of the shops and schools. This is a requirement of the Borough Design Guide.

Highway Safety

A pedestrian crossing should be provided on Matthews Green Road between the proposed development and the existing shops and pub.

Matthews Green Frontage

In order to comply to comply with CP3 sections a) and f), 4.19 of the Wokingham Borough Design Guide Section 4 R9 and R10 we request that conditions are attached to any approval of this application relating to the two storey plots facing onto Mathews Green that no future development of these plots will be allowed above the level of the proposed buildings' eaves.

Car Parking

While car parking provided conforms to local policies we would raise concerns that these are met in a number of cases by unallocated car parking. It is this Council's view that all properties should, where possible, have allocated spaces. Unallocated spaces can lead to many problems and disputes in the future.

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