

**Extract from Draft Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning Committee – 8**  
**February 2023**

**83. APPLICATION NO.222367 - LIBRARY PARADE, CROCKHAMWELL ROAD, WOODLEY**

**Proposal:** Full application for the proposed creation of a mixed use building consisting of the retention of the existing 3 no. retail stores at ground floor level and the addition of 16 no. apartments on new first, second and third floor levels, including the erection of three and four storey rear extensions with associated car parking, cycle and bin stores, following partial demolition of the existing building.

**Applicant:** Mr Hardeep Hans

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 419 to 470.

The Committee were advised that updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda included:

- Clarification to paragraph 64 to note that all 10 car parking spaces would have facilities for electric vehicle charging;
- Clarification that the applicant's energy consultants had indicated that the development could achieve CO<sub>2</sub> savings of approximately 65 percent over the Building Regulations Part L (2021) baseline, exceeding Council policy requirements;
- Comment that re-commencement conditions 3, 5 and 11 would cover materials, landscaping and boundary treatments, and would include CGI images;
- Clarification regarding the 'wind tunnel' effect referred to by third parties;
- Additional condition 23 in relation to window shutter details.

Bill Soane, Woodley Town Council, spoke in objection to the application. Bill stated that the four storey building would overlook the neighbouring Beechwood Primary School, whilst all but five of the dedicated car parking spaces would be removed. At present, there was space for 18 car parking spaces for five retail units. Bill added that only having five spaces for the retail units could result in staff of the retail units having to pay for public parking, at a considerable cost per day. Bill felt that this proposal would therefore have a negative impact on local businesses, and noted that a 'wind tunnel' effect was still possible to increase as a result of this application. Bill asked that the application be approved, as it was not in the best interests of local businesses or residents.

Bruce Chappell, resident, spoke in objection to the application. Bruce stated that he lived in one of the flats above the Lidl building with his daughter, directly opposite Library Parade. Bruce added that one of reasons he purchased his property was due to the amenity space and privacy offered due to the building's height, in addition to a quiet balcony. Bruce stated that he was shocked to see the addition of an extra floor at the proposed development, with windows directly opposite both his and his daughter's bedroom, which would result in a total invasion of their privacy. Bruce added that whilst the distance between two dwellings was within planning guidelines,

in his opinion the separation between the existing building and the proposed development was inadequate. Bruce commented that he would have been happy for a planning officer to visit his property and assess the impact of the potential development, however this had not happened. Bruce noted the potential detrimental impact on the value of his property in the future as a direct result of the proposed development, whilst he would also be subject to loss of light and additional noise pollution. Bruce stated that as a shift worker, peace and quiet were very important to him and this development would be harmful in that regard. Bruce concluded that he was not opposed to development however this application represented overdevelopment in his view.

Paul Butt, agent, spoke in support of the application. Paul stated that he had been impressed by the town centre offering in Woodley, and was of the opinion that the height of the proposed development was not out of keeping with the surrounding area. Paul added that there had been recent investment into the existing retail units which would be retained as part of this development, whilst the height of the development would be comparable to the height of the building opposite as that building and the flats above it were commercial in height. Paul stated that there were two flats set back on top of the Lidl building, and the internal relationship between those and the proposed development had been carefully considered. Paul thanked planning officers for their engagement on this matter following a site meeting and internal viewing, which resulted in the amended plans being considered this evening. Paul added that benefits of the development included delivery of 16 flats on a brownfield site including 5 affordable units, including two wheelchair accessible flats each with a disabled car parking space. Paul commented that all 10 of the car parking spaces for residential use would include facilities for electric vehicle charging, whilst the 5 retail units were as a result of the lease with the applicant. Paul stated that the energy consultant for the application had commented that CO<sub>2</sub> savings of sixty-five percent over and above building regulations could be achieved, which was in excess of Council policy.

Shirley Boyt, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. Shirley stated that it was vital for dwellings to provide generous living space, especially where private amenity space was in short supply. Shirley added that only 9 of the 16 proposed apartments had a balcony, which was not in accordance with R16 of the Borough Design Guide. Shirley felt that the quality of life for future residents would be greatly improved if there were fewer apartments, each having access to a balcony. Shirley stated that the proposed lift was to be located at the opposite end of the building to the accessible apartments, meaning wheelchair users would need to navigate the entire length of the building in an area mostly exposed to the elements. Shirley hoped that the inclusion of bathrooms on the plans for the accessible units was a mistake, as these should be fitted with level access wet rooms. Shirley was of the opinion that car parking provision was inadequate, with 16 apartments only attracting 10 resident car parking spaces, two of which were to be allocated to the accessible units. Shirley felt that the remaining units would not be car free, and residents would be forced to park in adjacent streets to the detriment of existing residents. Shirley added that retail staff would also be forced to find alternative parking, possibly in residential streets, and questioned where large delivery vehicles would park to unload for the shops on Library Parade. Shirley queried why the extraction, heating and cooling units servicing businesses at Library Parade were not shown on the

plans as there would be required to relocate as part of this development. Shirley asked that the application be deferred to allow the aforementioned issues to be addressed.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried whether there would be an offsite contribution to affordable housing as forty-percent of the proposed 16 dwellings should result in 6.4 units rather than the proposed 5, queried whether the affordable units should reflect the housing mix of one and two bedroom units, queried the parking requirements for the three retail units, and queried when would be a sound case for moving against car parking standards for residential units. Adriana Gonzalez, case officer, stated that Wokingham Borough Council's (WBC's) affordable housing team had assessed the proposals for the amount and mix of units and had found them to be acceptable, whilst the details of affordable housing contribution would be contained within the S106 agreement. Adriana stated that the car parking was informally used by retail staff and the public, whilst there was already a departure of 27 spaces currently for the existing use of the building. Adriana added that car park free units were not uncommon in very sustainable locations, and noted that all of the flats above the Lidl building were car free. Kamran Akhter, Principal Highways Development Control Officer, stated that this was a very sustainable location with public car parking available in the locality, whilst a car parking management plan would be conditioned.

Stephen Conway commented that the WBC housing team would most likely have considered the two accessible units as part of the applicant's affordable housing contribution. Stephen felt that a site visit may prove informative to Members to assess the context of the site in relation to its surroundings.

Stephen Conway proposed that the application be deferred to allow a site visit to assess the impact of the proposed development on neighbouring properties. This was seconded by Andrew Mickleburgh.

**RESOLVED** That the application be deferred to allow a site visit to assess the impact of the proposed development on neighbouring properties.

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