

**116. APPLICATION NO.221797 - "CROCKERS", RUSHEY WAY, EARLEY, WOKINGHAM**

**Proposal:** Outline application with all matters reserved for the proposed erection of 9 no. dwellings following demolition of the existing dwelling.

**Applicant:** Mrs C Burrows

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 109 to 146.

The Committee were advised that updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda included clarification with regards to access, amount of development and trees and landscape issues.

Sandra Shaw, resident, spoke in objection to the application. Sandra was of the opinion that moving from one property to 9 properties was an example of overdevelopment, and whilst the plans were indicative, they failed to address a number of concerns raised by residents and the Council. Sandra felt that the application failed to demonstrate how a suitable and safe access could be achieved, whilst a 30m junction spacing, as outlined in Wokingham Borough Council's (WBC's) 'Manual for Streets', had not yet been addressed. Sandra stated that Tiptree Close, opposite the application site, was a key entrance to Hillside Primary School and was in constant use. Sandra added that the existing angled decline into the drive at Crockers made it a dangerous blind spot to exit from. Sandra felt that the proposal contravened WBC's Climate Emergency Action Plan by not engaging with the local community and stakeholders, whilst policies CP3, CC03, TB21 and TB06 required development to protect and retain existing landscaping features. Sandra added that the proposals was contrary to policy TB06 in that it would result in the loss of residential garden with relatively little provision of replacement of soft or green landscaping. Sandra commented that a TPO was applied to the site in 2022, requiring seven important trees and an important group of trees be retained. Sandra added that there was no protection for the existing essential hedgerow which provided screening, whilst the TPO of several trees could not effectively be protected from damage via construction work to the driveway. The existing hedgerow provided habitat, shelter, corridors, rest spaces and safety for a wide range of wild birds and animals in addition to providing screening for neighbours, and destruction of this green corridor would result in wildlife not returning for many years. Sandra stated that 14 properties bordered the quiet site, and the addition of 9 dwellings would lead to an unacceptable intrusion of privacy and amenity for existing residents. Sandra felt that the development of 9 properties, some of which could be up to three storeys in height, would radically alter the character of the area. Sandra asked that the Committee defer the application in order to conduct a site visit.

Daniel Thompson, agent, spoke in support of the application. Daniel stated that many of the issues raised by objectors would be considered in detail at the reserved matters stage, should outline permission be granted. Daniel added that the WBC highways team had initially objected to the application, however this had been withdrawn following a revision to the scheme and suitable conditions, subject to further detail at the reserved matters stage. Daniel stated that the density of the proposed development sat at the lower end of the scale of the density of the surrounding developments. Daniel was of the opinion that three storey properties were found within the surrounding area, and could be viewed via 'street view'. Regarding landscaping, Daniel commented that this was to be dealt with at the reserved matters stage. However, to validate the application, a tree survey was carried out which identified Grade B trees on the site, and the focus of the landscaping solely

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focussed on those elements specifically required for this outline application. Daniel added that removal of any Grade B tree would result in its replacement with two good quality trees and a management plan to ensure their survival. Daniel stated that all other landscaping decisions, including the fantastic existing hedgerow, had not been resolved as this was only an outline application. Daniel added that access to the site was existing, with development taking place around the site. Daniel concluded by stating that all relevant details would be presented at the reserved matters stage, subject to approval of this outline application.

Pauline Jorgensen, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. Pauline stated that a reduction in the proposed amount of properties from 10 to 9 was welcome, however serious concerns still remained that this area could not accommodate this level of development. Pauline stated that the planned access did not meet highways standards and had not changed as it was almost directly opposite to Tiptree Close rather than having a 30m offset, whilst it also appeared to be very narrow with no pavement, which would make it difficult for cars to pass or refuse vehicles to access the site. Pauline noted that the landscaping officer had raised concerns regarding the loss of TPO trees when the access was widened. Due to the proximity of the site to Hillside Primary School, the area already experienced issues relating to parking. Pauline felt that it would not be necessary to remove the TPO tree should the proposed number of dwellings be further reduced, allowing more space to access the site. Pauline was of the opinion that the site was cramped, would not provide a public open space, and would leave residents with an unattractive and largely hardstanding fronting. Pauline stated that plots 1, 9, and 6 did not meet standards, whilst she did not understand how one plot having a longer plot mitigated other gardens with smaller spaces. Pauline felt it essential that existing hedging was retained, whilst the development should not be allowed to accommodate three storey dwellings.

Caroline Smith, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. Caroline asked that the Committee undertake a site visit during school pickup time to understand issues relating to access, parking and safety. Caroline added that permanent traffic calming measures had recently been installed on this busy road outside of Hillside Primary School. Caroline stated that if this was a new estate, creation of a crossroad with no refuge on a busy road would not be acceptable. Caroline added that the site had mature hedgerows and TPO trees, and the tree at the entrance to the site would have to be removed in addition to much of the greenery at the site. Caroline commented that much of the wildlife inhabiting the site, which at present was very vibrant, would be lost as a result of this development. Caroline raised concerns regarding the proposed proximity of the new dwellings in relation to existing properties, especially if some of the proposed dwellings were to be three storeys in height.

Andrew Mickleburgh stated that there were a number of concerns in relation to this application, including access, TPO trees and landscaping, site elevation and its relation to surrounding properties, and whether up to 9 homes could be accommodated on site. Whilst some of these issues would be considered at the reserved matters stage, should outline approval be granted, Andrew suggested that a site visit would allow the Committee to more fully appreciate the context of the site.

Stephen Conway regretted that this was an outline application, as it would facilitate the principle of development in the absence of detail.

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David Cornish stated that whilst he had sympathy for residents, this site was located within a major development area and WBC was required to deliver more homes. David queried whether 9 homes was the maximum that could be built on the site if the application was approved. Benjamin Hindle, case officer, stated that a maximum of 9 homes could be delivered via this outline permission should it be granted.

Wayne Smith commented that approval of this outline application, and establishment of a principle of development, could make it easier for a future application to be lodged to propose an increase over and above 9 dwellings.

Alistair Neal was of the opinion that 9 dwellings may constitute overdevelopment of the site.

Andrew Mickleburgh proposed that the application be deferred, to allow a site visit to be undertaken to facilitate a better understanding of the context of the site. This was seconded by Stephen Conway.

**RESOLVED** That application 221797 be deferred, to allow a site visit to be undertaken to facilitate a better understanding of the context of the site.

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