

PLANNING REF : 251621
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 22 Park Avenue
: Wokingham
: RG40 2AJ
SUBMITTED BY : Mrs Debbie Gillingwater
DATE SUBMITTED : 01/09/2025

COMMENTS:

I object to this planning application for the following reasons:

1. Scale, height and design

The proposed development of 21 apartments over three storeys is far too large a building for such a small plot of land and is totally out of keeping and scale with the surrounding houses/environment.

The designs seem to have been taken from much taller buildings (e.g. the Council offices and Elms Field townhouses, which are not visible from the proposed site), instead of the properties directly adjacent to it on Park Road and Park Avenue, which are generally two storey

Victorian/Edwardian-era detached residential houses. It would dominate Park Road, Wellington Road and Station Road, thereby harming the established historic character.

The existing properties on Park Road and Park Avenue have maintained the 'ridge-line' rule. The bulk and height of the proposed building will feel completely overbearing for the residents of both roads. Despite the stepped massing on the plans, the height and design of the roof will negatively affect the privacy and light levels of the immediate neighbouring properties on Park Road.

2. Parking

It is totally unrealistic to expect that the development of 21 apartments in Wokingham Town Centre with only four visitor and two disabled parking bays, will ever be 'car free.' There are very few households without at least one car within a town (and with transport links on their doorstep) these days, as public transport is too

infrequent, expensive or unreliable. Public transport does not serve where residents need to go, nor does it provide "comparative door-to-door journey times" (Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan). There is no evidence that the public transport links are such that residents of the proposed development will not wish to own a car.

Slough Borough Council admitted in a report (Slough Observer, 30 Oct 2024) that its attempts to go car free with new housing developments "have not been successful" and have led to parking issues on and near major roads. The Council's report goes on to say that there have been on-street parking problems "outside developments with low levels of parking" and that that this has meant "safety issues for pedestrians due to reduced pavement space and blocking of visibility splays which increases risk of accidents."

The lack of residential parking spaces appears to be contrary to the

Local Plan policy of applying parking standards. The 14 flats under construction on Barkham Road/Oxford Road and the affordable and key worker housing in the centre of Wokingham town centre (Norton Road and Peach Place) all provide one parking space per residence, even though they are in walking distance of the same transport links as the proposed development. Surely the same rule should apply when the Council applies for planning of this site?

There is no clarity on how a "car free" situation would be monitored and 'policed.' Will there be enforceable clauses in each resident's tenancy agreement to agree not to have a car or allow their visitors to park their car/s on Park Road or Park Avenue? Park Road and Park Avenue already have to deal with nuisance parking from vehicles not associated with either road and would not welcome increased parking problems as a result of this development.

The plan provides for four visitor spaces. It is very likely that there will be times when there are more than four visitors to the site at one time. Where will these extra visitors park? They will no doubt want to avoid paying for (and walking to) parking at the station or leisure centre car park etc and will end up parking on Park Road/Park Avenue or on nearby streets, worsening parking availability for existing residents and generally causing an ongoing nuisance for those living on these roads.

In addition, The Transport Statement says that where occupants require a car from time-to-time, options include using local hire car companies. Where will residents park their hire cars as there are zero resident parking spaces on the site? Are they expected to park on the Visitor spaces? If not, parking will, no doubt, spill onto Park Road and Park Avenue.

Furthermore, the Construction Management Plan states that there will be "no on-site car parking" during the build, which begs the question - where will the construction workers park? As above, they are unlikely to want to walk to, or pay for parking so will no doubt park on Park Road and Park Avenue, or on neighbouring roads.

Park Road and Park Avenue are private roads maintained by its residents at their own expense. Any damage that occurs to the roads (e.g. due to parking or using the roads to turn their vehicles around on the recently re-gravelled surface etc) both during construction or afterwards, by the residents of the new development, or their visitors, will no doubt fall on the residents of the two roads.

The first part of Park Road is unadopted. The Transport Statement draft Proposed Site Plan indicates that "The new tarmac surface (will be) finished to adoptable standards" and section 3.1.4 of the plan mentions "...markings include double yellow lines up to the site entrance on both sides of Park Road." The proposed application lacks clarity on the Council adopting the first part of Park Road, thereby undermining enforcement of the proposed double yellow lines up the main entrance.

3. Highway safety

One of the two entrances to the proposed development is a few metres after the turning into Park Road from the busy Wellington Road junction. Indeed, the Transport Statement says that the "site is located on a prominent corner junction between Wellington Road and Station Road in Wokingham Town Centre." The plan suggests that there are going to be two disabled bays just outside this entrance (perpendicular to Park Road). Vehicles pulling out from these two disabled bays are at serious risk of collision with vehicles (a) pulling into Park Road from what is effectively a 'blind corner' on the Station Road end of Wellington Road, and (b) coming in/out of the service road alongside 4 Park Road.

It is not clear from the plans how and where visitors using the visitor spaces in the shared service yard will access the building as there doesn't appear to be an entrance at the back. This would imply that the visitor would need to walk down the service/access road (potentially in the dark) which is inconvenient and hazardous to their safety.

The six metre length of each of the two disabled bays do not provide enough clearance at the rear to load/unload from vehicles and will mean people having to stand in the road. This cannot be safe?

Residents of both roads, including families with young children, regularly walk up and down Park Avenue and Park Road. Although the Transport Statement says that deliveries to the site will be "from Park Road or the rear of the site." It is most likely that it will be the former and it is not ideal, nor safe, for delivery vans to be parked down the first section of Park Road obstructing cars entering and leaving Park Road and Park Avenue and risking pedestrian safety (see point above on the enforcement of the proposed double yellow lines).

4. Traffic generation

The proposal will mean that more vehicles will be accessing a very quiet cul-de-sac, both during development of the site (with delivery lorries and construction vehicles etc increasing traffic at this already hazardous junction), and after, resulting in unacceptable disruption for residents of both Park Road and Park Avenue.

Considering that the main vehicular entrance to the proposed development is on Park Road, I question why Park Road is not included in the official Site Address, alongside Station Road and Wellington Road?

The additional traffic to/from the site will affect the unadopted first part of Park Road. It is not clear who will maintain this section of the road in the future?

5. Nature conservation and biodiversity

The scheme fails to meet the 10% biodiversity uplift required under national guidance. The development would remove one of the last few green spaces in the town centre and will involve cutting down an established poplar tree on the site (which has a Tree Preservation Order) and replacing it with a new tree (not the same maturity or stature) on the corner of Station Road and Wellington Road. This is clearly not an adequate replacement. Why have TPOs if a tree can simply be cut down if it is in the 'wrong place' for a planned development on Council land? The removal of this tree would be contrary to the Wokingham Borough Design Guide (section 4.6). Why couldn't the plans for the building have incorporated this tree?

The ecological impact assessment states that "The Site is set within Wokingham town centre and surrounding landscape comprises highly urban environment with busy roads and train station." Although this green space is of modest size, and rather wild, it provides a welcome break from the surrounding built-up areas (the "highly urban environment") and contains valuable wildlife and vegetation. Rather than developing on this piece of land, should we not be preserving and enhancing it: (a) to promote wildlife, and (b) for the enjoyment of the local residents or visitors to the town arriving by public transport whose first view of Wokingham may be around this site?

The main vehicular entrance would be on Park Road. The building would feel less overbearing and intrusive if the main entrance was placed around the back of the building out of the way of the first part of Park Road. That way, the current hedging on the first part of Park Road could be maintained and the additional noise and safety risks, mentioned above, reduced.

On 6th August 2025, a Council news article stated that (the proposed site which had been) "previously earmarked for office use, has been reallocated for residential development due to a surplus of office space and a growing need for affordable housing." Perhaps this "surplus of office space" could be better used for providing residential/affordable housing rather than continually building on small/limited areas of green space?

6. Planning Notification

Since moving into Park Avenue (over two and a half years ago) I do not recall being consulted about this new development at the bottom of our road prior to the Council applying for planning permission. In addition, there don't appear to be any planning notices visible around the proposed site.

7. Deficiencies in community/social facilities

With all the new housing developments, are there any plans to increase local health services which are already being stretched, e.g. GP and dental surgeries etc?

For the above reasons, I respectfully request that the Council refuse this application.

