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Dear Sir(s)

Site Address: 10 Mitchell Way, Woodley, Wokingham, RG5 4NQ

The case for refusing the application is set out in the Officer's report and decision notice, which has been previously submitted to the Inspectorate. The Local Planning Authority however wish to make the following additional comments in response to the Appellant's Statement and other issues raised.

Character of the Area:

The appellant's characterisation of the appeal site as "incidental" or "non-functional" land in Section 3.1 of their statement demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of the term "amenity" in a planning context.

Amenity is not defined solely by physical access or recreational utility; rather, it encompasses the visual, spatial, and environmental qualities that contribute to the pleasantness of a locality. In the context of the Mitchell Way estate, a planned residential development, these grassed areas were an intentional design component. A wider appraisal of the surrounding area, including both Mitchell Way and Dowding Close, clearly demonstrates that corner plots are consistently characterised by generous areas of open amenity land, either as wide portions of green space or as mature landscaping.

These areas form an important and intentional part of the originally approved estate layout, providing visual interest, softening the built form, and maintaining a sense of openness at key junctions. The "function" of this land is therefore to provide a spatial hierarchy and high-quality design, which is a core tenet of Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 and CP6, Policy CC03 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan and Section 12 of the NPPF.

While the appellant argues in Section 3.3 that residential boundary treatments

are a "normal feature" of the Woodley area, this generalisation ignores the specific site-context and the harmful physical form of the proposal. The Council does not dispute that fences are common domestic features; however, their acceptability is predicated on their siting and their relationship with the established street scene. In this instance, the proposed 1.8-metre high close-boarded fence is not replacing an existing boundary in situ but is being projected forward into an area of open amenity land. This move shifts the "built edge" of the property significantly closer to the highway and removes a significant section of the existing landscaped amenity area.

Furthermore, the appellant's case fails to account for the fundamental visual conflict between the proposed enclosure and the established pattern and flow of the street. The junction of Mitchell Way and Dowding Close is defined by a natural, sweeping curve. The existing south-side boundary fencing broadly follows this curve, reinforcing a sense of continuity and visual "flow" in the streetscape. In contrast, the proposed boundary treatment introduces a rigid, rectilinear footprint that cuts directly across this alignment. By imposing a sharp, straight-edged boundary onto a rounded frontage, the development creates a visually jarring "pinch point" that appears as a contrived and discordant insertion into a carefully planned residential layout.

Although the appellant suggests that "landscaping can soften the appearance" of the fence, the Council maintains that any such planting would act as a reactive screen to hide a poorly sited and projecting fencing, rather than a proactive design feature that contributes to the public realm. High-quality landscaping should be an integral part of a development's design, used to enhance a positive layout, rather than a prescription used to treat the symptoms of a fundamental design failure.

The Council's position is that development must be physically and visually integrated into its surroundings from the outset, as required by Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP3 and Section 12 of the NPPF. To allow a discordant structure on the basis that it might be partially concealed, or that its appearance could be softened by planting, would undermine these design-led principles. A scheme of landscaping cannot restore the spatial integrity of the junction that the original estate layout intended. Ultimately, the offer of "softening" is an insufficient substitute for the primary visual relief currently provided by the open amenity land; it merely attempts to obscure the harshness of a new boundary without resolving the underlying harm to the character of the area.

Highway Safety:

The Council maintains that the proposal has not been supported by sufficient technical evidence to demonstrate compliance with Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 and CP6 of the Core Strategy and section 9 of the NPPF.

While the appellant's "Highway Visibility Technical Note" in Section 4 suggests that visibility standards could theoretically be met, this remains an unsubstantiated assertion. The appellant has not submitted a scaled, visibility splay drawing as part of this appeal to demonstrate that the required 2.4m x 43m

sightlines can be achieved within land under their control.

The Appropriateness of Planning Conditions

In response to Section 4.5 of the Appellant's Statement, the Council contends that a planning condition would not be an appropriate mechanism to resolve this issue. A 1.8-metre high close-boarded fence, by its nature, creates a solid obstruction to visibility. Whether such a structure is compatible with the required safety splays at a 30mph junction is a matter of fundamental feasibility, not a minor detail.

Without a scaled visibility splay plan, it cannot be definitively concluded that the proposed fence, placed in the specific location shown on the block plan, would not impede the sightlines of motorists or pedestrians. In the absence of this technical proof, the Local Planning Authority must adopt a precautionary approach to highway safety. To grant permission subject to a visibility condition, where the feasibility of that condition remains unproven, would risk creating a development that is either fundamentally unsafe or physically unimplementable.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out in the officer report and detailed here, the Inspector is respectfully requested to dismiss the appeal.