

PLANNING REF : 242654
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Applegate
: Applegate Limmerhill Road, Wokingham, Berkshire
: RG41 4BU
SUBMITTED BY : Dr Rex Lucas
DATE SUBMITTED : 10/11/2024

COMMENTS:

Subject: Objection to Planning Application for Ye Olde Leathern
Bottel, 221 Barkham Road, Wokingham, RG41 4BY

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to formally object to the planning application referenced above. As a local resident and regular patron of Ye Olde Leathern Bottel, I am deeply concerned that the proposed changes will negatively impact the character of the area, the heritage of the pub, and the wellbeing of the community. Below, I have outlined my specific objections in detail.

****1. Loss of Car Parking Spaces****

The speculative access road to the field to the north will eliminate approximately 25% of the existing pub car park. The provided parking study, based on a single day's data, is insufficient to capture the year-round variation in parking needs. With reduced parking capacity and increased accommodation needs, there will likely be parking overflow onto Barkham Road and surrounding residential streets, leading to increased congestion, potential obstruction of the bus stops and road safety risks. This could deter patrons, thereby threatening the pub's viability as a local business.

****Recommendation:**** The planning authority should insist that the speculative access road be removed from this application and instead be proposed in a future housing-related application where it would be more appropriate. The current parking capacity should be retained to prevent further strain on local roads.

****2. Impact on Character and Heritage****

Ye Olde Leathern Bottel is a cherished local landmark with a distinct traditional character. The proposed modern alterations such as loft conversions, additional roof lights, and changes to fenestration risk undermining the historic appearance of the building. These changes do not align with the pub's rustic, countryside charm, which is vital to its appeal for both residents and visitors.

****Recommendation:**** Proposed changes should respect and maintain the traditional architecture, minimizing modern alterations to preserve the unique character of the site.

****3. Lack of Justification for Changes to Access Road****

No clear evidence has been provided that justifies the need for

redesigning the access road. There is no evidence provided by the applicant to suggest that the current access arrangement is inadequate or poses safety issues. relocating the access point to the west could even pose additional safety risks, given the current poor visibility to the west and the volume/speed of traffic from that direction. The changes seem speculative and unrelated to the current development needs of the pub.

****Recommendation:**** The planning authority should require justification for changes to the current access road. Approval should only be given if it can be demonstrated that the proposed changes improve safety without negatively affecting the environment.

****4. Inappropriateness of Speculative Access Road****

The inclusion of an access road to the field to the north appears speculative and unrelated to the current pub development. Adding an access road that currently has no purpose other than potentially facilitating future housing development is questionable and seems out of place in the context of this specific application. This road serves no immediate benefit to the proposed changes for the pub and may even indicate an intention to use this approval as a stepping stone for unrelated development, which should be properly evaluated in a separate, dedicated application.

****Recommendation:**** The planning authority should question the inclusion of an access road that is not directly necessary for the pub's current proposed development. It should be removed from this application and deferred until any future, related application is presented where its relevance can be fully assessed.

****5. Erosion of Green Space and Increased Urbanization****

The proposed extension and new access road would encroach into green areas, contributing to urban sprawl in a region valued for its rural charm. The reduction of green space would erode the separation between Wokingham and Barkham, setting a dangerous precedent for further encroachment on equestrian land.

****Recommendation:**** Local planning policies that protect green spaces should be strictly enforced. Any encroachment should be minimized to preserve the area's rural character.

****6. Loss of Trees and Impact on Wildlife****

The removal of mature oak trees along Barkham Road has already negatively impacted the local landscape and wildlife. The further removal of vegetation under the current proposal will exacerbate this, harming biodiversity and diminishing the area's natural beauty.

****Recommendation:**** A comprehensive tree protection plan, including the replanting of native species, should be part of the application. An ecological survey should also be conducted to assess and mitigate the impact on local wildlife.

****7. Negative Impact on the Pub's Viability****

While the proposal may increase accommodation facilities, it fails to address the negative effects on the pub's day-to-day operations during construction. The combined impact of reduced parking, construction disruption, and aesthetic changes could threaten the pub's long-term viability. As a vital community hub, any threat to its success could have profound consequences for local residents.

****Recommendation:**** The planning authority should require a business impact assessment to ensure that the proposed development does not jeopardize the pub's role as a community hub. The assessment should include measures to minimize financial strain during construction and ensure continued patronage.

****Conclusion****

In summary, the proposed development threatens the heritage of Ye Olde Leathern Bottel, the surrounding environment, and the local community. While I am open to supporting the addition of accommodation if it genuinely benefits the pub, I strongly oppose elements that appear to facilitate speculative housing development. I urge the planning authority to reject the application or require significant amendments to address these concerns.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Rex Lucas

"Applegate", Limmerhill Road, Wokingham, RG41 4BU

10th November 2024