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3 Carey Road
Wokingham
RG40 2NP

Planning Application Number: 242066

Ascot House, Finchampstead Road, Wokingham, RG40 2NW

Full application for the proposed raising and modification of the roof of the existing building plus the erection of an extension to form additional first, second and third floor accommodation in order to create 10 no. additional dwellings with car parking, cycle parking, refuse stores, landscaping and associated works.

We wish to lodge our objection to the above referenced planning application on the following grounds.

1. Errors in the application

Ascot House Daylight and Sunlight Report - Neighbouring Properties, Appendix 1 incorrectly identifies the locations of numbers 1 and 3 Carey Road on the plan which, given this was a desktop exercise, would throw doubt onto the accuracy of the whole exercise. In addition, Appendix 2 does not show all the windows of neighbouring properties in Carey Road.

Furthermore, this report does not take into account the change in ground level which rises quite steeply from Carey Road to Denmark Street.

105PL2SK01RevB - Overlooking Ground Floor Plan has various windows for numbers 3 and 5 Carey Road incorrectly labelled as non-habitable room windows.

Ascot House Planning Statement paragraph 4.10 states WBC's adopted Development Plan documents are out of date which is incorrect.

The *Statement of Community Involvement* refers to planning application number 213400, which was withdrawn, and not the current application. There has been no attempt by the applicant to undertake any consultation with the local community or local councillors with regard to the current application. In particular, there has been no consultation with the current occupants of Ascot House.

Ascot House - Ecological Impact Assessment paragraph 5.1.2 states that the site is identified to be just outside the 5km buffer zone for Thames Basin Heath mitigation zone. We would request that planning officers check the veracity of this statement as we believe it to be inaccurate.

2. Overlooking, loss of light and overbearing impact

As mentioned above, the *Statement of Community Involvement* refers to an online meeting held with local residents in mid-2021. At this meeting the applicant was asked to provide a visual impact assessment for the properties on Carey Road, something they said they would do. The assessment was never forthcoming and so we had to produce our own assessment of the impact the application would have on our property.

In the current application again there is absolutely no indication of the visual impact the proposed development will have on the properties on Carey Road. The *Townscape and Visual Appraisal* (TVIA) document completely omits Carey Road from the summary of visual effect, which given the fact that these properties border the site is unacceptable.

It should also be noted that the ground level drops quite significantly between Ascot House and the houses in Carey Road. Ground level at the rear of Ascot House sits approximately two storeys above ground level of the houses of Carey Road. This means that raising Ascot House to four storeys would be the equivalent of a six storey building compared to the houses on Carey Road.



The proposal as it would appear from Carey Road properties

The above photomontage shows the introduction of a balcony running around the parapet of the existing building which will overlook the rear gardens in Carey Road. In their *Proposed Section XX Overlooking Plans*, the applicant seems to suggest that people standing on the balcony or at windows would only look straight ahead and not down, which is patently absurd.

We feel that, if constructed, the visual mass of this development would have an overbearing impact on our property, particularly given its elevated position relative to Carey Road. The photomontages below show how the proposed development would decrease the amount of sky visible from the first floor of our property. Given that these are north-facing windows, maintaining the highest level of visible sky is important, particularly when taking into account the rising ground levels. Reducing the level of visible sky would decrease the amount of scattered light reaching the windows and would also have a negative psychological effect for residents.



*Current view from 1st floor of
3 Carey Road*



*Proposed view from 1st floor of
3 Carey Road*

3. Parking, highway safety and traffic impact

Policy CC07 'Parking' from the February 2014 Wokingham Borough Development Plan Appendix 2 states that:

It will be the responsibility of the developer to prove that parking provision has been adequately catered for on a proposed site. The developer must prove that parking will not have a detrimental effect on traffic safety or on the character of an area due to an increase in parking on the public highway. This should be set out in the Transport Statement or Transport Assessment as part of the planning application.

The applicant's *Transport Statement* states that there are currently 24 parking spaces and this number will be increased to 36, giving a ratio of 1.06 spaces per unit. However, a comparison of the *Existing Block Plan* and the *Proposed Block Plan (Parking)* shows only 3 additional spaces being provided which have been shoehorned in at the back of the property.

In addition, it is the lived experience of residents in all the surrounding roads, that one space per flat is grossly insufficient, particularly in an area that is already at maximum capacity for parked cars. Since 2 Carey Road and 44 Finchampstead Road have been converted from offices to flats, despite having allocated parking within the developments, parking by residents of those developments and their guests in Carey Road has pushed the parking situation to a critical point. See below for typical situations on Carey Road. It is without doubt that building an additional 10 flats will lead to even more cars parking in the roads immediately adjacent to Ascot House and making the parking situation even more untenable for local residents.



Typical parking situation in Carey Road looking east



Typical parking situation in Carey Road looking west

4. Local and national planning policies

Ascot House falls within the area covered by Wokingham Town Centre Management plan and also within the Elms Field Character area. The scale of the proposed design for Ascot House is completely disproportionate to all the surrounding residential buildings, the vast majority of which are two storeys high. Given the close proximity of Ascot House to the Wokingham Town Centre and Langborough Road Conservation Area, we would ask the planning officers to determine if a Heritage Assessment needs to be undertaken.

In addition, the Wokingham Local Plan, dated 2010, and the latest update to this, do not earmark this development for additional housing.

The National Planning Policy Framework and the Wokingham Local Plan both have a requirement for social or affordable homes. The applicant has stated that this is not financially viable, however, it was very clear what the property was when it was purchased and so this should have been taken into consideration at the time and appropriate plans put into place. The financial argument, therefore, is a poor excuse. Given that Ascot House is a town centre location, it is even more important that the requirement for social or affordable homes is met.

Wokingham Borough Council Policy TB23 states that development must ensure that all new developments are ecologically permeable, **through the protection of existing, and provision of new wildlife corridors which should be linked to existing green infrastructure**. Firstly, it should be noted that the provision of the Biodiversity Net Gain Metric within the planning documents is in such a form as to render it unreadable. The *Landscape Design Strategy* proposes the construction of a few extra ornamental planting areas with five new native trees. It is hard to see how this would comprise provision of new wildlife corridors, especially as the plan shows most of the trees placed close to the building itself.

5. Previous planning consent conditions

It is our understanding from residents currently living in Ascot House that the developers are in breach of the conditions applied to the planning consent granted for the original conversion to residential properties. Further planning permissions should surely not be granted until the developers have proven to be capable of meeting previous conditions placed on them.

Finally, we would like to invite the planning officers and borough councillors to visit the site in person to put the application into context with the surrounding properties and all the objections that have been raised before making a decision.