

Objection to Woolf Bond Planning application: Waingels Road, Charvil.

App No. 250407

Submitted by: Jim Gillett BEM, Waingels Road, Charvil

Please find attached an objection to the above Planning Application by Woolf Bond Planning for 9 new houses in Waingels Road, Charvil.

This objection is submitted by myself and on behalf of residents of Waingels Road. We believe that our objections have been clearly stated; however, we would be pleased to respond to any questions which you may have.

COMMENTS ON THE 'PLANNING STATEMENT' BY 'WOOLF BOND PLANNING' RE A NEW DEVELOPMENT IN WAINGELS ROAD, CHARVIL

Preface

As one would expect, the 'Planning Statement' drafted by Wolf Bond Planning is certainly very carefully worded, to present its arguments in the best possible light. However, there are numerous 'statements' within it which are either extremely 'carefully worded', or which are simply inaccurate (i.e. untrue!). There is not sufficient space here to counter each and every 'inaccuracy', and hence only the more outlandish have been addressed here.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS ON THE WOOLF BOND DOCUMENT

Section 2: Site Description

Para 2.5 states that:

"... the scheme will be seen in the context of this development which means that the site does not result in urban expansion but rather logical infill"

This would appear to conclude that the existing 10 houses can be 'infilled' by an additional 9! That's not "infill", it's doubling the number of houses! It is also not 'infill' as the additional houses would be in a wholly new line. Simply stating it does not make it true.

Section 2.9 (and 2.12) states that:

"The nearest bus stop is located on Tippings Lane approximately a ten/fifteen minute walk from the site.". However, what it fails to mention is that buses come at only 'two-per-hour' and nobody in Waingels Road uses them; everyone uses their cars. Access to these infrequent busses is via a narrow country footpath, which is poorly lit in the evenings/night. The final paragraph of Section 2.9 is therefore wholly misleading. Charvil has only one small corner-shop (which is approximately a mile's walk from Waingels Road), and Woodley is even further.

Section 3

The final wording of Para 3.5 states that the development "logically responds to the surrounding pattern of development". This is 'waffle' which is simply untrue. Para 4.5 also states that "The gross density of 10 dwellings per hectare is fully commensurate with the character of the area". This again is untrue. It would be very significantly more dense than the surrounding area.

- a) Current houses are on 0.5-1.5 acre plots; whereas this proposal would put 9 houses on 2.47 acres minus the road, so <0.2 acre plots, and hence absolutely not 'in keeping' as stated by Woolf Bond Planning.
- b) There is currently no mains drainage in Waingels Road (all houses are on septic tanks). How will these nine houses impact the environment with 'Septic Tank soak-aways' immediately adjacent to the lake in Ashenbury Park?
- c) Re road safety: all current houses have clear sight-lines onto the road when driving out. However, the single exit for all nine of the proposed new houses will join Waingels Road on a blind bend.
- d) Will emergency services be able to access the development through the small single track passageway?

Section 4.5

This section attempts to show that the proposed development conforms to the various CP3 requirements; most significantly as regards the density of the proposed housing. As noted above, all current Waingels Road housing is on plots of between 0.5 to 1.5 acres. The proposed development would put nine houses, plus the access road, on a 2.47 acre site (i.e. nine ~0.2 acre sites - see above). Hence not as stated by Woolf Bond “Fully commensurate with the character of the area”! There are no houses in Waingels Road with plots this small!

The remainder of Section 4 continues (at great length) to attempt to ‘justify the unjustifiable’ (biodiversity, housing supply elsewhere, not within a ‘valued landscape’ etc.); however, no matter how you look at this, such a development is essentially an ‘unjustifiable proposal’.

We are not aware of whether the Council’s current housing supply is 1.7 years or longer (as stated by Woolf Bond); however, we are aware of the very significant number of houses recently approved on the A4 at Twyford (around 1 mile away), and these alone will severely test the Council’s current other facilities (doctors, schools etc.).

As regards Woolf Bond’s Section 5 comments, WBC is currently developing a new Local Plan, which will almost certainly require significant additional housing. However, this will inevitably require significant ‘well planned’ developments including additional ‘services (shops, schools, doctors etc.)’. Hence, despite what Woolf Bond would attempt to imply, putting 9 new houses in the wrong place (see details above) will do very little to address the local needs.

Section 6 (6.1-6.9)

Looking at the Woolf Bond wording in their Sections 6.1-6.8, there is a very clear attempt to ‘Muddy the Waters’ of the rules. We would argue that it is indeed a ‘Major Development’ in the context of the locality (it would more than double the number of houses, and these would sit behind, and they are certainly not ‘in keeping’ with the locality), and hence we do not believe that “Permission in Principle” (PIP) should be granted in this case. There are certainly ‘Material Considerations’ to indicate otherwise, despite Woolf Bond attempting to imply otherwise. The current plan would be a very clear ‘Over Development’ of the site and be completely inconsistent with the locality.

With regards to Woolf Bond’s assertions in Paragraph 6.9, these do warrant some significant ‘clarification’.

- i) Yes the development is indeed ‘Outside the village settlement boundary’, and indeed would not normally be supported. However, Woolf Bond then goes on to try to justify why this should not be the case here; however, their ‘justifications’ are tenuous to say the least.
- ii) They claim that “Council have approved applications in the countryside designation within the immediate vicinity”. While this may be factually correct, what they omit to mention is that two of these ‘approvals’ were actually “demolish and rebuild” of single old houses on 1.5 acre plots, and the third was a single newbuild on a 1.5 acre plot, and with safe access (i.e. not on a corner) to Waingels Road.

To attempt to use these “in-keeping re-builds” as justification for PIP for nine new houses on significantly smaller plots, and with poor access to Waingels Road, is frankly stretching credibility to breaking point. Finally, in who’s opinion has the policy “long since stopped being appropriate ...”? Is this actually WBC’s opinion, or just Woolf Bond’s?

Section 6.10

This paragraph states that: “... *it is considered that the nature of the development proposed is appropriate for its context*”. One has to ask “Considered by who?”. The proposed development is for nine houses on plots less than 20% of the size of almost all other houses in the road! In no way can that be considered as “appropriate for its context”.

Section 6.15

This Paragraph again attempts to convince the reader that the proposed development “*is considered to be compatible with the character of the surrounding area*” and “... *a logical infill in the established pattern of development along Waingels Road*”. One has to ask “Considered by who?”. However, just writing it down doesn’t make it true; which it certainly isn’t!

As noted a number of times above, neither of these statements can bear the least amount of scrutiny. Ten minutes walking along Waingels Road will be sufficient to demonstrate this.

Finally in this paragraph, it states that “*In relation to access, the width, capacity and visibility available are to be considered at the technical details consent stage*”. This is a rather transparent attempt to obtain PIP before these awkward details need to be addressed. Logic would demand that, as these issues are also key to the request for PIP (from a road safety and access standpoint), they must most certainly be considered upfront and before any PIP.

Sections 6.18, 6.19 & 6.20

These sections again attempt to persuade the reader that there is easily available public transport (which there isn’t). This has already been addressed above. In Waingels Road, everybody uses a car, for all the reasons outlined above.

Section 6.22 & 6.23

Section 6.22 is accurate to the extent that there are “existing residential properties to the north”. However, it is wholly untrue (and wholly misleading) to state that there are “further homes in all directions”. There are no homes to the East for at least a mile; to the South is only Ashenbury Lake and Ashenbury park; to the north is Sonning Golf Course, and there are no homes to the west until you reach Woodley!

Section 6.23 is, again, similarly incorrect. It states that the site is “surrounded by residential development”. These two paragraphs are very good examples of where this ‘Application for PIP’ is both inaccurate and attempts (in numerous places) to convince the reader that black is white. This issue alone should be enough for WBC to look carefully at all these details (and visit the site) before permitting any PIP.

Section 6.24 & 6.25

Simply keeping-on saying it, doesn’t make it true! The site is not acceptable for PIP, it is not a sustainable location, and it is certainly not “Surrounded by existing residential development”.

The proposed development is:

- totally at odds with the established neighboring housing;
- it is demonstrably not “in keeping with the established pattern and building line”;
- it could not ever “become part of the established pattern and building line”;
- to say that “they would assimilate into the existing pattern” is clearly nonsense;
- and frankly, averaging the current ‘~1-house-per-acre’ with the proposed ‘1 house per 0.2 acres’, and coming-up with a theoretical ‘average’ is mathematical nonsense.

Section 6.27

As already discussed above (and to be polite), this paragraph is simply untrue.

Section 6.28

This paragraph attempts to convince the reader that all the inaccuracies and presumptions listed in the previous paragraphs here are true and have been accepted! Unfortunately, these conclusions are based on numerous inaccuracies and presumptions (as detailed herein). There can be no reliable “presumption in favour” based on the statements provided within the Woolf Bond planning application.

Section 6.25 (and elsewhere)

As noted in numerous paragraphs above, no matter how many times the ‘Application for PIP’ states that it is “in keeping with the character and appearance of the surroundings”, the fact remains that, demonstrably, it is not!

Section 7.2

This paragraph, yet again, attempts to convince the reader that, despite all the evidence to the contrary, somehow “The scheme would respect and assimilate into the existing built form and building line ...”. This is despite the fact that it would actually start a whole new ‘building line’!

Section 7.3

This paragraph attempts to assert that, because of all the previous arguments and statements, the application for PIP should be approved. However, it fails to address the fact that a very large proportion of these earlier ‘arguments and statements’ are wholly incorrect (see above). There is therefore no justification for the statement that “the location of housing is outweighed by the benefits of the scheme”.

CONCLUSION

It is certainly clear that the local area (Charvil/Twyford) does indeed need (and deserve) more housing. However, much of this is already planned. There are a further 75 houses currently planned for Charvil; under the Hicks development, which is well-planned and in-keeping. There are also two very significant new developments planned near Twyford on the A4 (on the edge of Charvil). These developments will come with all the necessary infrastructure and will then be well served and in-keeping with their surroundings; unlike the nine houses proposed here for Charvil by Woolf Bond Planning.

ONE-PAGE SUMMARY COMMENTS ON WOOLF BOND'S 'PLANNING STATEMENT'

There are 37 pages of 'information' within the Woolf Bond Planning Statement. However, not all of it can be taken at 'face value'; in fact very little of it can be taken at face value! If ever there was a document which attempts to convince the reader that Black is White, then this is that document!

Provided above is a 4-page analysis of some of the most 'controversial' claims within the Woolf Bond Statement; and below is a brief summary of the worst 'excesses' within that document.

The Woolf Bond Planning Statement attempts to imply that the construction of these nine new houses would somehow be 'infilling' the existing eight houses and would be 'in-keeping'. This is despite the fact that:

- i) they would sit in a completely different 'building line' behind the existing houses, and
- ii) would sit on plots approximately one fifth of the size of the existing plots!

Hence this 'in keeping' claim is clearly nonsense and is simply designed to provide a very tenuous justification for the planning application. While there are numerous other spurious claims within the Woolf Bond document (which have been addressed within the earlier 'Comments'), the key issues can be summarized as follows:

- a) they propose nine new houses on ~0.2 acre plots, to sit in a new 'building line' behind the eight existing houses which are on ~1-acre plots. This is neither 'infilling' nor 'in-keeping'.
- b) They state that: "*the plot is sufficient in size with enough land to accommodate the erection of 9 dwellings in keeping with the character and appearance of the surroundings. The ability of respect the existing pattern and built form of development surrounding the site is illustrated on the illustrative Layout Plans*".

In what possible way can "9 new houses on 0.2 acre plots and sitting in a completely new 'building line", be 'in-keeping' with the existing 8 houses (to the immediate north) which are on ~1 acre plots?

Summary

This application is a rather transparent attempt to justify the unjustifiable. The proposal is neither 'in-keeping' nor practical.