

PLANNING REF : 243229
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 5 Ryecroft Close
: 5 5 Ryecroft Close Wargrave, Reading, County
: RG10 8BL
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Richard Thomas
DATE SUBMITTED : 03/02/2025

COMMENTS:

Planning Application Number: 243229
Site Address: 109 Victoria Road Wargrave Wokingham RG10 8AG
Description: Full application for the proposed erection of 8no. dwellings following demolition of the existing buildings and structures plus alterations to the existing access.

I am writing to object to this Application.

I have lived in Wargrave for 43 years all within 200m of the Application site. I co-owned No 94 Victoria Road directly opposite the site for 16 years and lived there for 7 years.

Points 1 to 4 below are offered in a personal capacity. Points 4 to 8 in a professional capacity as a chartered geologist with over 50 years experience in construction /land development specialising in contaminated land, land stability, hydrogeology, flooding and inage.

1. SCALE/ DENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development is far too dense for the size of the site. Far too many homes are crammed in, and this is out of keeping with the neighbourhood. Para 4.19 of the Planning Statement confirms this.

Paragraph 4.18 of the Planning Statement confirms that the gardens are shorter than required by the Borough Design Guide.

The 2.5 / 3 storey houses proposed are too imposing for the character of the area.
There is no affordable housing provision provided on site. I believe an appropriate mix is required so as to increase accessibility to housing in Wargrave for young people and key workers.

2. IMPACT ON VILLAGE SHOP, NEARBY RESIDENTS AND PARKING

The shop is a valuable asset for the community. It serves residents that cannot drive or easily access facilities outside the village. However, many residents drive to the shop and park on the gravelled area or on Victoria Road as close to the shop as they can. Parking on this section of road outside the shop is always congested with shop customers competing with local residents for the space available.

Paragraph 4.33 admits the proposed parking provision on site has a shortfall of one space and suggests the shortfall can be "easily accommodated" on Victoria Road. The reality is this development will just make the parking situation worse.

The shop has a number of deliveries every day, some of which involve large vehicles, and there are also one or two commercial waste collections every week. Conflict between the convenience store

business needs (for ease of customer parking and deliveries) and the residents of the new development as it is currently designed seems likely to be inevitable. This may be a contributing factor in the shop not being able to continue in business.

Para 2.3 of the Planning Statement suggests some of the parking will be allocated for the staff owners of the convenience store and the flat above. No further details are provided. Clarification is required so the shop owners /operator can be quite clear about the off road parking they are being offered under this application.

The Application documents make no mention at all of Construction Stage vehicle parking for site operatives /contractors etc. If these vehicles are allowed to park on Victoria Road then it will cause chaos during the daytime. If consent is to be granted then I would urge the Planning Authority to impose a planning condition such that no construction vehicles /contractors vehicles or operatives cars shall be parked on Victoria Road. All such parking shall be on the site itself.

This could form part of a requirement secured by Condition and approved by the LPA before site works commence for a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to minimise the construction stage impacts on nearby residents and the environment.

3. HIGHWAY SAFETY

The site access visibility splay to the East up Victoria Road suggested by the Transport Statement and Site plan does not appear to take into account obstruction to visibility caused by cars, vans and delivery vehicles parked outside the shop. Safe access needs to be reconsidered.

4. ACCESSIBILITY

Para 4.5 of the Design and Access Statement states "There are bus stops on either side of Victoria Road situated within about 100m of the site and give good access to Wargrave train station, as well as surrounding towns (Reading, Twyford, Wokingham, Henley on Thames); therefore development of the site meets with Core Strategy CP6." This is an absurd statement.

There is a limited 127 bus service only on Saturdays and the 153 operates only a single service on Wednesdays. Neither go near Wargrave Station.

It takes longer than the 10 minutes claimed in Para 2.2 to walk to the Station.

5. LAND CONTAMINATION

Up until about 15 years ago there were regular bonfires on site. Also there will have been storage and use of chemicals such commercial fertilisers, pesticides, herbicides and fungicides, storage and use of fuels and lubricants for horticultural and garden machinery used

and maintained on site, and for a gardening /grounds maintenance business run out of the site. There appears to be asbestos in the outbuildings and their run down nature may have led to asbestos in the ground. Chalk Soils can lead to raised levels of carbon dioxide in the ground.

These former potentially contaminative uses may have resulted in a legacy of ground contamination at the site. The site lies in a groundwater source protection zone also for the public water supply wells at Sheeplands WTW. It should be treated as a potentially contaminated brownfield site. The provisions of NPPF, Planning Practice Guidance and any relevant Borough policies should be followed. Appropriate investigations, sampling and testing, and risk assessments etc. together with the preparation of a remediation/mitigation strategy if necessary, should be undertaken and submitted before consent is granted.

6. LAND STABILTY

Chalk Bedrock (as is present at the site) is susceptible to dissolution with the formation of solution features that can manifest themselves as sinkholes, endangering property and resulting in restrictions when siting soakaways and infiltration drainage features as part of SuDS. Concentration of infiltrating water in SuDS systems can activate /reactivate latent solution features.

Restrictions on the use of infiltration drainage at the site may mean the Applicant does not have a viable drainage strategy see below. An appropriate level of investigation and risk assessment should be undertaken before consent is granted.

7. DRAINAGE STRATEGY.

The proposed drainage strategy puts forward two options. Option A involves infiltration. Option B attenuation and discharge to a so-called 675mm diameter surface water sewer that runs along the northern boundary of the property. The Applicant has failed to undertake any testing to determine whether the infiltration option is feasible. The infiltration option may also fail if there are constraints on the siting of infiltration drainage features due to the risk of solution features (see above).

The JNP Group Drainage Strategy report is confusing and contradictory in that whereas Paragraphs 6.2.3 and 6.3.2 suggest two Options are on the table, Paragraphs 6.3.1 and 6.3.4 dismiss the infiltration option and state discharge will be to the Sewer.

The calculations provided in Appendix D relate only to the infiltration option, with an assumed infiltration coefficient not confirmed by testing. The viability of the discharge to sewer option is not demonstrated by calculation

Section 5.2 of the Drainage Strategy confirms that the 675mm diameter pipe does not have the capacity to accept water from the site under some extreme storm conditions and they propose construction of a swale on the site to take the excess water. The

Sewer is actually the culverted course of the ephemeral stream known as The Braybrook, after which local streets are named.

No calculations on the 675mm dia sewer pipe capacity are presented. It is not possible to ascertain whether the correct catchment area, extending right up to Highfield Farm and Bowsey Woods, has been used. No calculations or engineering drawings for Swale have been provided.

The 225mm dia surface water sewer running west along Victoria Road regularly surcharges under high intensity rainfall events and surplus water flows down the road. I have seen the road gutter outside the shop overflowing round the corner on to the site. Sometimes the manhole covers in Victoria Road blow off.

Reference to the Land Registry Ownership Polygons mapping shows that there is an unregistered strip of land at least along part of the northern boundary of the site (if not all along this boundary), separating the rear gardens of Victoria Road and the nursery from those of Purfield Drive /Fidlers Walk. This strip of land contains the 675mm dia pipe and presumably was retained in separate ownership so as to maintain access to the pipe should it be needed.

So any drainage strategy involving use of this pipe and construction of an overflow swale may not be feasible for the site if the Applicant cannot demonstrate ownership of the land in question, or has not concluded an agreement with the owner of that strip of land allowing its use. If Thames Water or the Local Authority own the land and/ or the 675mm dia pipe, then I would have expected that the Applicant provide documentation that shows either or both of these bodies will permit access for a pipe connection, allow the pipe connection itself, and access and consent for the swale.

Overall in my opinion the proposed drainage strategy falls far short of the detail required to demonstrate its complete viability and deliverability to the LPA and the LLFA, and I would urge the LPA and the LLFA to seek further detail from the Applicant that demonstrates a viable and deliverable drainage strategy before granting consent.

8. DRAINAGE AND HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Based on Section 6.7 of the Drainage Strategy it looks as if maintenance of SuDS features under single ownership will be the responsibility of the homeowner while services under roads will be in the hands of a private management company, with an obligation placed on all homeowners etc. within the development via their title deeds to pay their own share of maintenance costs. Schemes now known as "fleecehold". New Build Estate Management Fees: How Much Do They Cost In 2024?

Below ground components include conventional soakaways, borehole soakaways, infiltration trenches, permeable pavements, cellular attenuation storage systems (think layers or stacks of interconnected milk crates) under driveways, gardens, open spaces, and roads. All these tend to silt up and decline in performance with the passage of time. Their condition cannot be easily or cheaply

monitored, and often the first indication residents have of a problem is flooding under climatic conditions where flooding did not occur previously when the development was new. Maintenance and rehabilitation of these below ground systems is expensive, and homeowners can be presented with large unexpected bills when the need for this arises.

Members of the public buying homes on this development will be in complete ignorance of the potential issues as described above relating to the storm water drainage at the site. They will be at the mercy of the Management Company set up and probably owned at arms-length by the developer with no tribunal or dispute resolution mechanism. It is an appalling situation.

9. CLOSING

This would be a suitable site for development and would have my support if:

- a) The technical issues noted above are resolved (access visibility splay, construction impacts, contamination, land stability, and drainage)
- b) Drainage and Highways are adopted.
- c) There was a lower density development, perhaps 6 dwellings (two of which are affordable) more in keeping with intensity of development and character of the immediate area,
- d) None of the development proposals might prejudice the ongoing existence of the convenience store and
- e) the front of the site incorporates say 4 short stay (30 minute 0800 to 2000hrs everyday) parking spaces for users of the shop, to alleviate some of the parking and its associated road safety issues along this section of Victoria Road.