

PLANNING REF : 242654
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 51 Reeves Way
: Wokingham, Berks
: RG412PS
SUBMITTED BY : Mrs Susan Hughes
DATE SUBMITTED : 26/11/2024

COMMENTS:

APPLICATION 242654 - Ye Olde Leathern Bottel 221 Barkham Road Wokingham. (herein referred to as the "Public House")

I strongly object to this application on the following grounds:

1. THE PROPOSED NEW ACCESS ROAD:

The proposed new access road layout would partly serve as an access to the Public House but also the Application plans and proposals show very clearly a new vehicular road access leading to the land/field to the North of the Public House. This not only takes away some of the existing parking for pub customers but moves the access location onto Barkham Road to a more dangerous position. The proposed new access road gives no benefits whatsoever to the existing Public House business or its customers as the existing access road is sufficient for the Public House's use.

However, it does appear to give enormous benefit towards the landowner's/applicant's moves towards its underlying goal of establishing a housing development on the field adjacent to and to the North of the Public House. Worse than this, we have witnessed a series of pre-emptive actions over recent years to remove access 'problems' such as mature trees, TPO trees and other established vegetation without permission or consultation, prior to the submission of this landowner's planning application. This behaviour can surely not go unnoticed.

Impact on road safety: - The proposal is to move the new junction onto Barkham Road nearer to the bend and hill brow to a place where there are double white lines painted on Barkham Road (which currently help to warn motorists of the upcoming bend and hill brow). The new junction would therefore be closer to these dangerous features. The existing Public House car park entrance and currently exits onto a section of road with solid/dashed lines in the middle. Whilst the current junction doesn't offer ideal visibility, it is at least located further from the bend and hill brow than the position of the proposed new access road junction. I therefore strongly object to moving the access road junction to a more dangerous position.

A previous planning application 232621 for a development of 60 new properties on land to the North of the Ye Old Leathern Bottel public house, including a new vehicular access road from Barkham Road, was refused for good reasons. The Application we are considering now about the Public House proposes the same dangerous junction position as the previously refused application. I have attached a copy of the Refusal Notice dated 30th August 2024 which outlines clearly why that proposal for a housing development with an access road off Barkham Road was refused.

The Design and Access Statement, supplied as part of the current

application for the Public House, by Matthew Allchurch Architects states "Relocation of the access road to enable any future residential development to land to the north". The existence of this statement strongly suggests that the landowner (who owns both the Public House site and the field to the North of the Public House) is continuing to attempt to undermine the previous planning decision which rejected residential development on the adjacent field. The current

Application regarding the Public House is a masked attempt to gain an access road from the Barkham Road to the field behind the Public House in order to develop the field to the North of the Public House. One of the Application's proposed plans clearly shows a yellow arrow marking the proposed access to future development. This is an unacceptable addition to an Application to extend and upgrade the Public House and bears no relation to the changes to the Public House that are being proposed.

My fear is that if this current Application regarding the Public House is granted, then this would allow the landowner of the field to the North to assume that a precedent has been set allowing him vehicular access onto the field from Barkham Road. This would weaken the Planning Authority's ability to refuse future applications for the development of housing on this field. I therefore strongly object to the proposed new access road layout.

The land to the North must be adequately protected from future development.

2. CHARACTER OF THE AREA:

This proposed relocation of the access road junction at this section of Barkham Road would have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance at this point and would erode the break in development between Wokingham and Barkham (the existing and important Settlement gap between Wokingham town and Barkham). This green Settlement gap has been identified in Local Plans.

The existing green Separation gap between Wokingham Town and Barkham should be maintained in this vicinity between Bottel Copse (which lies to the south of Barkham Road and opposite the Public House site) and the nearby ancient woodland of Foxhill (which lies to the north).

3. ADDITION OF ACCOMMODATION TO THE PUBLIC HOUSE

I question the need to create 5 hotel/accommodation bedrooms in the Public House as no data has been provided to support this. Two local small hotels have closed down recently (one in Wokingham and one in Winnersh) presumably because they were no longer viable. We already have some very good, and varied priced hotels in Wokingham, which serve the existing need. I also question why people would need to stay at this location in Barkham Road, an out of town location, where car parking will become an issue.

4. CAR PARKING FACILITIES

I note that the proposed changes to the access road would result in a net loss of car parking spaces for users of the Public House, whilst changing the business such that it will require more.

I know from experience that the existing car park gets fully used, especially on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays and that some people are forced to park elsewhere on residential streets. With the proposed additional accommodation at the Public House, more car parking spaces will be required to serve these rooms. The Application adds 5 accommodation rooms but reduces the car parking by 23%.

It is clear from the details of the Application that the numbers of parking spaces are having to be reduced below their current level because the existing car park footprint has to be downsized in order to accommodate the new access road leading to the proposed entry point to an anticipated housing development that has yet to secure planning approval.

5. ECOLOGY:

If the proposed work/extension to the Public House is allowed to go ahead there would be a negative ecological impact on the site as a result of (further) removal of trees and shrubs that would be in the way of the extension works and realignment of the access road. Five mature oak trees were felled on this site on or around 27th June 2023. The Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association website (<https://www.wdvta.org.uk/>) provides some detailed information about these 5 trees (see WDVTA tree records: 3206, 3207, 3208 and 3209). This includes the two healthy, veteran oaks adjacent to the Barkham Road that were cut down, for no apparent reason, and the evidence covered over. Coincidentally, they were on the exact point where the proposed new access road is now suggested to join the Barkham Road. Were they mentioned in the August 2024 survey by DBA Arboricultural Consultants commissioned in this application? Of course not, because they aren't there! Has any action been taken against the landowners for their removal?

How can we trust this developer not to remove more trees (that it claims will be retained in this proposal) for the convenience of carrying out its proposed development?

The creation of this proposed access road and the increase in hard surfacing & engineering works resulting in loss of vegetation would detrimentally impact the Green Route of Barkham Road and erode the rural gap between Barkham and Wokingham. This major part of the proposed development is contrary to policy CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy, CC01, CC03 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan, the Council's Character Landscape Assessment and Section 12 and 15 of the NPPF.

6. REQUEST FOR PLANNING COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION:

Because of the sensitive nature of this Application (as this Application affects the current green Settlement gap between Wokingham and Barkham) and due to the number of objections already raised on the Planning Portal as well as those outlined above, any decision on this application MUST be taken by Councillors at a full Planning Committee rather than as a delegated decision by Planning Officers. Due to the underhand nature of the Applicant trying to secure vehicular access to the land to the North of the Public House for a future development of this land, this Application must not be

treated by the Planning Authority as a delegated decision by Planning Officers. It is really important that the Planning Committee has the final decision.

APPENDIX 1. (Refusal notice from WBC re:232621, 30th August 2024.)

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACTS TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENGLAND) 1990

Monopro Ltd C/O Pegasus Planning Group Ltd, First Floor, South Wing, Equinox North, Great Park Road, Almondsbury BRISTOL BS32 4QL

NOTIFICATION OF REFUSAL OF PLANNING PERMISSION Application Number: 232621

Applicant Name: Monopro Ltd Site Address: Land west of Limmerhill Road, Wokingham.

Proposal: Outline Planning Application for up to 60 No. dwellings including age-restricted housing for older people with associated public open space, landscaping, ecological enhancements, drainage and other supporting infrastructure, with access from Barkham Road. Means of Access to be considered (with Appearance, landscaping, Layout and Scale to be reserved).

Date of Decision: 30 August 2024 Wokingham Borough Council in pursuance of its powers under the above Acts and Regulations hereby REFUSES permission for the above development the reasons for which are specified hereunder. Reasons; Principle of development

1. The proposal represents inappropriate unplanned development outside of development limits within the countryside that is contrary to the spatial objectives of the development plan and to Policies CP1, CP3, CP6, CP9, CP11 and CP17 of the Core Strategy, Policies CC01, CC02, CC03 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan, the Borough Design Guide SPD and sections 2, 4, 12 and 15 of the NPPF. Layout and design

2. The proposed quantum of development within the parameters submitted for approval and access road would result in a cramped and a poorly laid out scheme which has not been demonstrated to achieve minimum separation distances or adequate private amenity space and would

introduce conflicts between private gardens and public spaces. The road layout and parameters for development would result in a fragmented pattern of development with streets that have poor passive surveillance and a decoupled access road that does not create a legible or integrated street network with the existing settlement

pattern. The development is contrary to policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy, Policies CC01, CC02, CC03 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan, the Borough Design Guide SPD, The National Design Guide and

sections 12 and 15 of the NPPF. Impact on the landscape and countryside

3. The proposed development will have a prominent negative and detrimental impact on the landscape and character & appearance of the area by reason of the loss of a sizeable section of open and attractive undulating landscape in the countryside with an urbanising large-scale development contrary to policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy, Policies CC01, CC02, CC03 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan, , the Borough Design Guide SPD, the Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment and sections 12 and 15 of the NPPF. Erosion of separation between settlements

4. The proposed development would significantly and prominently erode the last remaining open space that separates Wokingham and Barkham, resulting in a detrimental degree of visual and perceived coalescence between these independent settlements, contrary to policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy, Policies CC01, CC02, CC03 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan, the Borough Design Guide SPD, the Wokingham

District Landscape Character Assessment and sections 12 and 15 of the NPPF Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

5. The agricultural land is classed as Grade 3 and the application fails to demonstrate there would be no loss of Grade 3a Best and Most Versatile agricultural Land, or that such a loss would be outweighed by other material considerations, contrary to Core Strategy policy CP1 and section 15 of the NPPF. Unsustainable Location

6. The application site is within an unsustainable location that would not encourage a modal shift towards sustainable modes of transport, by reason of the countryside location outside of settlement limits, distances to facilities and services, suboptimal public transport links and poor quality of the walking/cycling environment, contrary to Policies CP1, CP2, CP3, CP6 and CP11 of the Core Strategy,

Policies CC01 and CC02 of the MDD Local Plan, the Borough Design Guide SPD and section 8 & 9 of the NPPF. Biodiversity Impact

7. The application fails to consider biodiversity degradation on the site in the form of felling two Veteran Trees, which are irreplaceable habitat. The development is contrary to Core Strategy Policy CP7, MDD Local Plan Policy TB23 and Section 15 of the NPPF. Thames Basin Heaths SPA

8. In the absence of a planning obligation to secure suitable avoidance and mitigation measures and access management monitoring arrangements, in terms that are satisfactory to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), the LPA is unable to satisfy itself that the proposals include adequate mitigation measures to prevent the proposed development from having an adverse effect on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, in line with the requirements of Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 as amended and Article 6(3) of Directive 92/43/EEC. The proposal would be contrary to Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan, Policies CP8 and CP4 of the Core Strategy. Employment Skills Plan

9. In the absence of a completed legal agreement, the proposal fails to secure opportunities for training, apprenticeships and other vocational initiatives to develop local employability skills contrary to MDD Policy TB12. Affordable Housing 10. In the absence of a completed Legal Agreement, the scheme fails to make adequate provision for affordable housing, contrary to Policy CP5 of the Core Strategy and Section 6 of the NPPF.

Signed Marcia Head Head of Development Management - Place & Growth
Date: 30 August 2024.