

PLANNING REF : 241933
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 4 Sutton Cottages
: Easthampstead Road, Wokingham, Berkshire
: RG40 3BW
SUBMITTED BY : Captain Thomas & Dr Deborah Shaves Royal Navy
DATE SUBMITTED : 01/11/2024

COMMENTS:

Our Reference: SWSdle/WBC/241933/COMMENTS/SHAVES

RE: RESPONSE TO PLANNING APPLICATION 241933 - RESIDENT COMMENTS

Dear Sir/Madam,

As residents of Byway BW WOKI 30 (Holme Green Lane) which bisects the proposed site for urban expansion of the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location (SWSdl), we will be directly impacted by the planning application (241933) from Lightwood Strategic / Nicholas King Homes for the South Wokingham Sdl Extension [1,2].

We recognise the demand for additional housing, are not opposed in-principle to appropriate development and remain committed to consultation with Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) and applicants [3] to ensure that the planning principles as laid out in the WBC Local Plan, Planning Policies and Supplementary Documents are followed. This requires the nature, history, and character of the existing landscape [4], including the disposition of all existing dwellings is retained [5]; the amenity to current residents is preserved; and any impact to us as inhabitants is minimised.

Yet the current application comes at significant impact: development on open countryside, green fields and agricultural land; a considerable extension of the southern perimeter of Wokingham residential development; the bisection of a historic byway [6]; and routing of a major new access road directly behind existing properties. The nature and character of the landscape will be detrimentally affected; significantly more traffic, noise and light pollution will be introduced; and local wildlife and residents' amenity will be negatively impacted. Further, the proposed development includes an area at risk of surface water flooding [7]. We seek revision of the proposal based on scale and design.

Scale and Design

The Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment (WDLCA) [8] is clear on required landscape strategy within the Holme Green Pastoral Lowland (N1): "to improve the character of the area through management and enhancements to the condition of the open pastoral farmland and the 'rustic' appearance of this area whilst allowing change to occur that would complement and reinforce the existing character" [9]. This proposal does not achieve this requirement - it would dominate and alter the existing character especially impacting existing properties.

The Wokingham Strategic Sites Report 2021 clearly details the need for appropriate housing density and scale [10], establishing an

average housing density of 30 dwellings per hectare [11] and a required total of 835 houses [12,13] across the 55.3 hectare SDL site [14] (including the provision of SANG [15]). We recognise that as part of the update to the Local Plan the housing requirement may increase and the application proposes 'up to 850 dwellings' across the '56 hectare site' [16]. To our knowledge, WBC has not published any revised figure from their 835 dwellings detailed in 2021. Notwithstanding, there is sufficient land within the designated site to deliver the proposed dwellings whilst not detrimentally affecting existing residents but this has not been achieved: the impact on the existing character, landscape and amenity of residents in accordance with the WDCLA and Wokingham Strategic Sites Report can and must be better mitigated - we consequently challenge the development scale and design on that basis.

Of great concern to us is that no account has been made for existing Byway residents located in the middle of the site, with new development now proposed at both the front (separate application) and rear of our homes. The lack of consideration is demonstrated by: a new major access road within metres of our property; a large housing complex to our immediate south; and the introduction of allotments directly along our boundary. Despite site photographs being provided within the application, none include a view of our houses from the proposed development area thereby under-representing the site.

Fundamentally, the plan takes no account of the significant impact to the current residents contrary to WBC current and proposed policy [17]. There is a need to reduce impact on existing dwellings, which can be achieved by removing the proposed development immediately to the south of the existing houses on the Byway.

Specifically, we object to:

1. The proposed 'secondary' vehicular access road - only metres from our property - will become a 'rat run' to access Easthampstead Road (through a new residential development) and at peak (school) times will inevitably back up with traffic. The proposed junction onto Easthampstead Road is on a short section of road with poor sightlines and already a hot spot for vehicle accidents without further

complexity being added. It will also further concentrate traffic around Holme Grange School rather than dispersing it. Resultant traffic, light, noise, and air pollution will all detrimentally impact our amenity and the surrounding landscape whilst safety concerns further undermine the feasibility of this option.

2. The proposed housing on the land to our immediate south will enclose existing Byway properties to both our front (separate application) and now rear, impacting our privacy. We note that no photograph has been provided of this view in the application. Further, Lightwood Strategic's 'Street Typologies' detail 'green edges' to new development "to allow everyone to benefit from views over the green open space" [18] and the application stresses the benefit of new homes overlooking green space. However, this design principle has not been applied to existing Byway residents who currently have a view over green open space but, in this proposal, will now overlook houses and roads. The proposed narrow allotment does not deliver this amenity.

3. The proposed allotments that would back-on to our property will directly overlook our dwellings and impact upon our privacy - there is seemingly no rationale for siting these in this location especially with new allotments already proposed opposite to Hambridge Farm with no impact to nearby residents.

4. The application does not align with the WLDC strategy for Holme Green "to enhance the existing character" and recommendation that "The open views and appearance of settlements being integrated within the rural landscape context should be conserved and enhanced" [19] or "The siting, layout, form, design and landscaping of development should incorporate measures to respect the setting of Holme Green Lane" [20] - we consequently challenge the development design on that basis.

Alternative Proposal

In seeking a solution, there is an opportunity to develop a more coherent and considerate scheme that satisfies all parties: recognises and complements the nature and character of the Holme Green landscape and existing properties; minimises impact to current residents; delivers the Council's residential requirement; specifically avoids developing in an area at risk of surface water flooding; and is more coherent with WBC policy, plans and assessments.

Accordingly, we propose the designation of SANG or amenity green space to the immediate rear (south) of the properties situated along the Byway. The proposed dwellings within this area (c.1 hectare) can be accommodated within the remaining site without detriment to the overall housing numbers.

Critically, our alternative proposal considerably improves the local environment and amenity over the application with only minor adjustments and is consistent with our responses to previous consultations. We note precedent to allocate SANG to the rear of existing properties in our vicinity during previous development consultations [21]. A pedestrian and cycle route across that SANG/open space to facilitate access for children to Holme Grange School could be provided (better aligning with requests from the school) [22]. Should the requirement for a secondary vehicular access road onto Easthampstead Road be unavoidable, a connection is possible to the south, via the proposed 'Village', where there is already access at Hambridge Farm [23] - a more suitable and safer location with less impact to existing residents.

The benefits of this alternative proposal are that it:

- Recognises and reduces the impact to the current nature and character of the landscape and environment; and retains our amenity and privacy as existing Byway residents [24,25];
- Delivers the WBC housing requirement and avoids development in an area at greater risk of surface water flooding, whilst using existing hedgerows as a natural border to development [26];

- Removes the proposed vehicular access road onto Easthampstead Road from directly behind the existing Byway properties, reducing concentration of traffic, noise, light, and air pollution. An alternative option is to use existing vehicular access onto Easthampstead Road from Hambridge Farm (to the south) benefitting from greater visibility, safety and deconflicting and dispersing traffic flow around Holme Grange School / Redlake Lane;
- Removes proposed allotments backing onto existing Byway dwellings retaining resident amenity and privacy. An alternative option is to relocate these to the proposed allotment site opposite Hambridge Farm with no impact to residents and with appropriate car parking;
- Maintains an appropriate green buffer (not an allotment) between existing Byway properties and the proposed new development, retaining a green corridor to the north and south of Emm Brook, and adjacent to Easthampstead Road [27,28];
- Creates an area for both existing and new residents to enjoy green space (SANG/amenity green space) on the western side of the site, providing walking/cycle/horse trails and allowing flora and wildlife to thrive and move.

We show this alternative proposal in visualisations provided separately via email.

The revised proposal delivers the WBC requirements and the essence of the Lightwood Strategic / Nicholas King Homes intent for the site. It also recognises the local environment and reduces the impact on existing residents; there is also precedence and it better aligns with existing WBC planning policy and strategy (incl. character assessments) - our revised proposal is compelling. We understand the need for housing and with minor adjustment to the application we can deliver a mutually satisfactory solution for the Council, residents, developers and the environment (Annex A).

As detailed previously, we are committed to working collaboratively to deliver an appropriate and considerate proposal that maximises opportunity and limits detrimental impact for all. We will remain closely involved through this process and are available to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,

Thomas & Debbie Shaves

Captain T D L Shaves Royal Navy
Dr D S Shaves

Notes:

[1]

<https://planning.wokingham.gov.uk/FastWebPL/detail.asp?AltRef=241933&ApplicationNumber=241933&AddressPrefix=&Postcode=&KeywordSearch=&Submit=Search>

[2] Nicholas King Homes & Lightwood Group

- The South Wokingham Strategic Development Location Extension (swextension.co.uk)

[3] We have previously responded to the Lightwood Strategic: Public Consultation; Wokingham Local Plan Update: Revised Growth Strategy;

and Wokingham Strategic Sites Report 2021.

[4] The strongest characteristics detailed for the Holme Green Pastoral Lowland (N1) area is: " the undulating landform, peaceful character and the open pastoral farmland and paddocks". Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment, Part 2. Para 18.20. Page 441.

[5] Recognising Holme Green as a hamlet of Wokingham Without possessing its own character and nature.

[6] "Without the SDL extension the farm - along with a historic lane (now a bridleway) linking to the hamlet of Holme Green (with its historic school and four other grade 2 listed buildings) - would represent the southern extent of the SDL built form, whilst with the extension these historic assets will be largely enveloped within the SDL's built form. there is a need for further work to understand the significance of the assets and the extent to which harm can be avoided and mitigated through masterplanning, design etc. It is judged appropriate to flag a risk of significant negative effects, pending further investigations / evidence". Wokingham Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal - Interim SA Report dated November 2021. Page 158.

[7] Wokingham Strategic Sites Report 2021 dated November 2021. Page 65 (Figure 25).

[8] Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment: Part 2

[9] Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment, Part 2. Para 18.23. Page 442.

[10] Wokingham Strategic Sites Report 2021 dated November 2021. Page 81.

[11] Wokingham Strategic Sites Report 2021 dated November 2021.

Pages

72-73.

[12] Wokingham Strategic Sites Report 2021 dated November 2021.

Pages 73 and 91.

[13] Designated a 'Constant Allocation' of 835 dwellings across Reasonable Growth Scenarios 1-12. Wokingham Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal - Interim SA Report dated November 2021. Table 5.5. Page 63.

[14] Wokingham Strategic Sites Report 2021 dated November 2021. Page 94.

[15] Wokingham Strategic Sites Report 2021 dated November 2021. Page 83.

[16] South Wokingham SDL Extension Phase 4C dated July 2024. John Simpson Architects Ltd. Para 2.1.3. Page 5.

[17] Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023 - 2040. Proposed Submission Plan. Policy SS12. Para 4c. Page 76.

[18] Lightwood Group Proposals - Nicholas King Homes & Lightwood Group
(swextension.co.uk)

[19] Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment, Part 2. Para 18.21. Page 442.

[20] Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023 - 2040. Proposed Submission Plan. Policy SS12. Para 4c. Page 76.

[21] Affecting 1 - 7 Easthampstead Road as part of the South Wokingham Major Development Area to our immediate north.

[22] Statement of Community Involvement dated July 2024. Boyer. Para 3.18. Page 9.

[23] Hambridge Farm, Easthampstead Road, Wokingham, RG40 3BS.

[24] "Protect the individual identity of settlements by conserving the rural character of the landscape and avoiding amalgamation of

these settlements". Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment, Part 2. Para 18.23. Page 445.

[25] Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023 - 2040. Proposed Submission Plan. Policy SS12. Para 4c. Page 76.

[26] "Conserve remaining hedgerows as important wildlife habitats and landscape features ". Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment, Part 2. Para 18.23. Page 443.

[27] Developing the 'green spine' linking to the already committed part of the SDL to the north. Wokingham Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal - Interim SA Report dated November 2021. Para 9.7.5. Page 100.

[28] Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023 - 2040. Proposed Submission Plan. Policy SS12. Para 4f. Page 76.