

PLANNING REF : 241900
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Mortimer
: Old Bath Road, Sonning
: RG4 6TQ
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Harry Murphy
DATE SUBMITTED : 27/08/2024

COMMENTS:

Dear Wokingham Planning Authority,

I am writing to formally object to the proposed amendment in Planning Application 241900, which seeks to remove the condition that the development is limited to persons over the age of 60 years.

My concerns are as follows:

1. Increased Traffic and Parking Issues:

- According to the UK Department for Transport's National Travel Survey (NTS), car ownership and driving frequency decline with age.
- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) data notes that people aged 65 and older make fewer trips per year than younger age groups.
- Research conducted by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and other studies suggest that retirement developments tend to have lower car usage.

I could go on with supporting evidence but the stats are there for all to see, retirement or flats for more mature aged people have lower car ownership and usage rates, which minimises traffic and parking demands.

Removing this condition of over 60 years in age will undoubtedly lead to families, students, or other non-retirement demographics moving in, resulting in increased traffic and a significant rise in the number of vehicles. This would exacerbate already inadequate parking provisions and increase congestion and potential danger, especially given the proposed entry/exit location almost directly in front of the dual carriageway (A4). This setup poses a serious safety risk, with cars turning in quickly (to cross incoming fast traffic), and therefore essentially accelerating into outgoing traffic from the proposed development - accidents waiting to happen.

2. Noise and Disruption:

Given the proposed change will result in a larger, more diverse resident population, increasing noise levels and general disruption. The proximity of the development to existing residential properties, including my own property immediately next door, makes this particularly concerning. A larger car park would mean more cars, more noise, and more light pollution from security lighting at night.

Living next to a large car park is not what I had anticipated when choosing to live here. Equally, we go from three houses the other side of the fence to another sixty homes!!! The current board line /

tree line between our properties is not in great condition and should these trees die or become diseased then we will have zero protection or privacy so more needs to be done to protect me and the other properties immediately next door.

3. Impact on Local Infrastructure:

The increased demand on local amenities such as schools, healthcare, and public transport that would result from this development is vast - essentially moving the dial significantly on the total population number of the village.

The council must consider the full extent of the demands this development will place on local infrastructure, particularly regarding traffic safety on the adjacent dual carriageway. Measures such as pedestrian crossings, lower speed limits, or even the installation of a bridge might be required, which would be costly. The funds received through any Section 106 payment would be insufficient to cover these essential safety measures.

4. Deviation from Original Planning Intentions:

The initial planning approval was based on the specific nature of the development as housing for people over 60. We have already seen many "tweaks" to the application but this latest proposal represents a fundamental shift from that original intent. I purchased my home with the understanding that the adjacent development would be for retirement / persons over the age of 60. Changing this now undermines the integrity of the planning process and sets a concerning precedent for future developments across the Borough.

5. Questionable Supporting Evidence:

It is important to note that some of the original data provided by the developer's consultants was questionable but also now very dated. As a Senior Director at a global real estate company, I feel and I speak with a larger degree of authority on this point and to be very clear, the traffic data, in particular, was flawed and did not accurately reflect real-world conditions of the road junction. As a resident familiar with the area and professionally seeing how actual studies should be far more comprehensive in their undertakings, I can attest to the dangers of the junction near the proposed entrance. Crossing the road as a pedestrian is challenging, and for children, it is highly dangerous. The council must thoroughly review all relevant information to ensure that decisions are based on accurate and reliable data. Accepting such planning amendments of the age restrictions falling away and without implementing changes to the current road entrance / exit is border line negligent on the part of the local authority.

6. 106 Agreement:

The current Section 106 agreement is insufficient. As Lewis Carroll aptly put it in *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*, "jam today or jam tomorrow." This phrase highlights the notion of future promises that never seem to materialise. In this

context, it feels like the council is being offered vague assurances of future benefits instead of receiving concrete income now. The critical issue for Wokingham Council to consider is how the initial funds from this agreement will barely make a dent in the significant investment required for local infrastructure. Without a more substantial and immediate commitment, the existing infrastructure will fail to meet the demands of our community.

In light of these concerns, I urge the council to reject the proposed changes to remove the age restriction on the residents, should the development proceed. The integrity of the planning process, the safety of the residents, and the well-being of the community must be upheld.

Thank you for considering my objection.

Yours sincerely,
Harry Murphy