

PLANNING REF : 241567
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 17 Cricket Hill Finchampstead
: Wokingham, Berkshire
: RG403TN
SUBMITTED BY : Pamela Minns
DATE SUBMITTED : 28/07/2024

COMMENTS:

I strongly object to the proposed planning application for 40 new houses off Longwater road for many reasons. The site is neither suitable nor sustainable.

I was born in the village in Cricket Hill, 65 years ago and there are LESS amenities' in the village now than there was in 1959. There is no shop, no post office and no garage all of which the village could boast in 1959. There was also a doctors surgery in the village at this time and although there is a surgery now, it is at Nine Mile ride, which is a car journey away and is already very heavily oversubscribed and at full capacity. This is due to the new development of Finchwood Park and re-development of Gorse Ride which are both within the

Finchampstead boundary. The same can be said for the NHS dentist at California Crossroads which currently has a FOUR year waiting list. Any new houses is going to add to the pressure on these already over stretched services.

The site is unsustainable as a car would be a necessity for all journeys to access amenities. This is contrary to Wokingham Borough council policies as they want to reduce carbon emissions and the use of vehicles in the area. There is NO public transport to rely on, only one bus a week on a Tuesday going to Wokingham which is the same as in 1959! The increase in vehicles in the village, possibly upwards of 80 a day due to the proposed development is a real concern. When I was young we used to walk to Nine Mile Ride to catch a bus to Wokingham, but in those days, this was not an issue, as there were far fewer cars on the road. Now you would be taking your life in your own hands as walking down Jubilee Hill there are NO footpaths nor verges to step onto, there are only steep banks either side affording NO refuge from the busy traffic. The junction where the War memorial stood for many years, is a recognised pinch point and any increase in volume of traffic here could be tantamount to disaster and make it an accident black spot!

Dell Road, Lower Sandhurst Road, Ambarrow Lane and Cricket Hill will be used as short cuts and these roads are already in a state of disrepair and cannot sustain any additional traffic. The entrance to the proposed development would create a hazardous junction on the already busy Longwater Road at the transition point from 60mph to 30mph. This is also almost opposite the entrance to the allotments and adjacent to an entry/exit into the Woodmoor estate.

A development of 40 houses in this location will completely change the character of the village from a rural idyll into a semi-urban area. This will look totally out of place as it consists of a much higher density of housing than any of the neighbouring housing and will do irreversible harm to the area. The site as recorded in the WBC local plan is 'outside the settlement boundary' and does NOT comply with the recently adopted Finchampstead Neighbour Development Plan nor does it comply with several of the Wokingham Local Plan policies. It should be left as a greenfield site for all to enjoy, whether it be dog walkers, joggers, hikers or bird watchers who at present enjoy the local environment for what it is, 'a haven for wildlife'. I regularly see many different species of animals and birds contrary to the Catesby

wildlife survey's which were only representative of a short period of time on any given day. I live here and witness an abundance of wildlife regularly including protected species such as a pair of breeding barn owls, bats and newts. All of the habitats for these and other species will be destroyed if this development is allowed to go ahead. From a nature conservation standpoint this is unacceptable as we are already losing many different species every year. This site is adjacent to the Manor Farm Lakes which is a proposed nature conservation area. Any development of any kind will impact this site irrevocably. There are ground nesting birds such as Little Ring Plovers, Lapwings, Snipe and Skylarks that all need protecting. The noise generated from the building and there after when residents move in will disturb any wildlife and birds.

The density of the proposed development is likely to require street lighting which is alien to village life and will have an urbanising effect and be to the detriment of wildlife, including the badgers which have a sett to the south edge of the development. It will also effect my quality of life and that of my neighbours as there will be light pollution that we do not have at the moment. This will have a negative impact on our mental health and well being because it will affect our sleep patterns.

Cemex who have extracted gravel from the adjacent site which is designated as a nature conservation area have applied for retrospective planning approval having changed the levels of the land from their original state. This I understand is yet to be granted 4 years later, so how in all good conscience could a planning application be given on the site in question which is adjacent to this site, when no one knows what the possible likelihood that there is for flooding. The proposed site has always been very wet historically. I know this for a fact as my dad farmed this land when he worked for Manor Farm, as a tractor and combine driver. I remember very well him cursing that he had got a tractor stuck in the field and had to leave it there all winter before it was dry enough to be towed out. This field is not suitable for development as it is naturally very wet. The water table has always been very high in the area next to the River Blackwater. There is also the issue of the sewage works which cannot cope now with the existing houses. Only recently did I witness 3 large tankers parked on Longwater road, for several hours waiting to pump out raw sewage to be processed else where. If it can't cope now how is it going to support 40 new dwellings?

The footpath on the north boundary of the proposed site will become a semi-urban alley way between the development and the Woodmoor estate. Many people enjoy walking, some with their dogs, along this public right of way. At the moment this is a lovely open space where to the south there is a lovely green panorama in which you can soak up nature in all its splendour. The affect it has on ones wellbeing is immeasurable.

40 new houses on this development will undoubtedly put a strain on the local primary school. Some years there are school places and other years there are not, but with this size of development the chances are there will not be enough places to accommodate the influx of school age children. Another reason for the development NOT being sustainable.

The proposed development is supposedly providing 70% affordable homes. Many people seem to be under a misapprehension of what 'affordable' housing means. To my knowledge it doesn't mean they will be 'cheap' but sold off to a housing association who will allocate them on a means tested basis using a strict criteria. Many people that I have spoken to think they will be cheap houses for local people. I don't think that is how it works. Correct me if I am wrong. I believe that Finchwood Park and the re-developed Gorse ride site have already catered for the amount of affordable housing needed in the area. My concern is, will planning permission be granted on the fact that 70% of properties will be affordable housing and then the developer will change the goal posts to suit themselves. I am not a business person but even I can see that building a development consisting of 70% affordable housing is NOT viable. In summing up I am very much against this development and hope that all points raised will be given due consideration.