

PLANNING REF : 242066  
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 4c Crescent Road  
: Wokingham  
: RG40 2DB  
SUBMITTED BY : Mrs Maria Gee  
DATE SUBMITTED : 13/11/2024

COMMENTS:

The planning statement states that "WBC's adopted Development Plan documents are out of date"; this is not true as the plan covers the period up to 2026.

This development is not earmarked for additional housing in the local plan from 2010, and neither is it in the latest update. It is not required and should be rejected.

The housing mix of 20% 1 bed and 80% 2 bed is not at all in accordance with WBC desired mix of housing.

The site is 0.25 hectares, there will be 34 dwellings, which is an unacceptable housing density of 136 dwellings per hectare; the local plan states that the average density for development should be 30-35 dwellings per hectare.

No social or affordable homes are proposed; as this is a major development, this is an unacceptable omission and not in line with NPPF or the Wokingham Local Plan. Previous advice was for two affordable units; the fact that the financial viability assessment says this is not possible should be ignored; the developers knew what they were buying and should have planned accordingly. That this development is in an urban town centre setting means this omission is particularly egregious.

The statement of community involvement is three years old and does not represent what actually happened at the meeting, as has already been noted in PA213400. The statement says that "the Applicant is committed to ongoing engagement with local politicians, residents, and businesses." There has been no follow up since 2021.

Specifically, there has been no consultation with the new occupants of Ascot House, nor with any new community representatives (councillors).

You can find my comments on the 'consultation' in PA213400 but here I reproduce them:

"I attended the meeting with the developers in July. In response to the summary provided by the developer representative, I sent the following email, which speaks for itself: Your summary of the meeting is good as far as it goes, although it doesn't tell the full story of the meeting, in my opinion. You state the concerns and the replies of your team, but not the subsequent comments of residents. There is nothing about the lack of belief from residents that your proposed solutions to the problems raised specifically with light, massing, and overlooking will do anything to resolve these issues. This building will reduce light, its position at the start of the hill down Finchampstead Road will be unacceptable massing, and will overlook neighbouring properties. With respect to the last point above, your presenter who talked about overlooking seemed concerned only with the perspective of those in the new flats: how the views would be lovely, etc, etc. This was, in my opinion, a misjudgement of the purpose of the meeting; that is, residents are concerned about overlooking of existing properties. This was pointed out by more than one resident but the presenter seemed unable to change tack and address the issues from a different perspective."

Ascot House lies within the boundaries of the town centre, as defined in the Wokingham Town Centre master plan (extant until 2026). As noted in the transport statement, the site lies within

the Elms Field

Character area. As such it should meet the design principles in that plan, stated as: "the highest design standards" and that "developers demonstrate conclusively that they will work with the Council and the community in delivering high quality design solutions".

Developers will be challenged "not only to meet current design standards but to exceed them and set new standards of excellence". Clearly this has not happened. The design of this building is a mess and comes nowhere near being high quality. The developers are not setting new standards of excellence, and they have paid lip service to working with the community (see above about the statement of community involvement). The new extension does not give any access to people who are mobility impaired, there being no lift to these higher floors; it is not built on inclusive principles.

Furthermore, the development of Ascot House will affect the character of the Denmark St area. This is described in the supplementary

planning document as having a "historic grain characterised by a fine grain with long plots Buildings are a mix of two and three storey development consistent with the town centre as a whole."

Quite clearly a box with a pitched roof, visible from Denmark Street and indeed Carey Road (despite protestations to the contrary in the application) is not sympathetic with the historic nature of these roads.

I would like officers to check the claim that this development lies outside the Thames Basin Heath 5km mitigation area, and appropriate SANG provided to minimise the effect on the Heath if this is not the case.

24 units have already been built on site, this adds another 10 and the road network cannot cope. Finchampstead Road is often at a standstill immediately outside Ascot House; this will only make it worse.

Parking spaces 10-15 are immediately adjacent the flats and will cause unacceptable light, noise and exhaust emission pollution. They should be sited elsewhere with a buffer zone between parking and dwellings. There is only one active EV charging point included, the rest are

passive EV points. If all 12 new parking spaces held EVs then one active point (7kw) is not going to result in meaningful access to charging, given that battery sizes are now above 50kWh (7 hours charging minimum). Furthermore, because there is no allocated parking, the active charging point will be shared by all 34 units. There should be more active charging points, and they should be 50KW, otherwise the notion of access is meaningless within the meaning of the new building regulations. As with PA213400 there should be an Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy provided to demonstrate how the provision is meaningful and future proof.

At least part of the new accommodation is accessed via a relatively steep stairway (Design and Access Statement 10). The remainder appears to be accessed from the existing entrance. None of the new accommodation is suitable for people with mobility impairments nor for families with young children.

I am also at a loss to understand the purpose of the external stairway because the rest of the documentation refers to all access being from the existing entrance. Officers and planning committee members need to assess whether this staircase is required and, if it is, does it conform with building regulations, including for emergency access and fire safety?

The daylight and sunlight assessment does not, it seems to me, accurately represent the hill that rises from Finchampstead Road to Denmark Street. There are no lines on the assessment that accurately show feet above sea level. Nothing is stated in the assumptions section of the report about the hill. The context elevations show more clearly the rise of the land and the overlooking that will occur downhill. Many residents have commented on the overbearing nature of the development on their properties. I would be amazed if this development were not visible from Denmark St and Langborough Road, given the rising ground. Both these roads are within conservation area, and there is a major impact on them; there is no Heritage Assessment and one needs to be completed.

There is clearly something wrong with the assumptions in the daylight and sunlight assessments, and the effects on the conservation areas, and officers and planning committee members should visit the site to see the impacts for themselves. Officers and planning committee members need to visit the site to determine the overlooking of existing flats because the design completed to date does not appear to be the same as that approved and included in the plans. Existing residents of Ascot House have pointed out inconsistencies and those inconsistencies need to be investigated and resolved.