

COPPER BEECHES – APPLICATION 251409 - OBJECTION

Dear Sir

We object to the application for 9 flats for the residential property of Copper Beeches.

The property was built originally as a single residential house which then became a Guest House with the owner's mother living on site. After the mother sadly died, it continued as a Guest House with rooms to rent.

This application is for 9 flats in one house that has two other buildings on site now with residential status due to permitted CLU's. **11 residences are now proposed on this site in this application when previously there had been one residential dwelling.**

However, since the two CLU's were permitted for the garage and shed at the rear of the property, there are **3 dwellings listed on this site in planning terms.**

Copper Beeches does have planning permission as a Guest House only but this has been discontinued since the death of Mr Gorecki's mother many years ago, who resided at the property and was the responsible person on site.

This is the first planning application to be made for flats in the property known as Copper Beeches. This application for 9 flats **is totally out of keeping with the established pattern and character of the area** and would cause adverse harm to the character and appearance of the established character of this area.

The general intensification of activity associated with the proposed 9 flats in this house would be materially out of keeping with the existing residential environment and the use of family dwellings within the surrounding area.

These 9 flats would be harmful through the significant overconcentration of flats in one dwelling and it is acknowledged an overconcentration of flats has the potential to lead to fundamental and unacceptable changes to an area's established housing mix and sustainability.

A precedent would be set if this application was to be approved.

*The Court of Appeal ruling in Kazalbash v Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities [2023] EWCA Civ 904 made it clear that the concept of an area's "**character and appearance**" in planning decisions goes well beyond just visual aesthetics*

The Court of Appeal found that the inspector's decision was logical, coherent, reasoned and "legally impeccable". He was required to consider the effect of the development on the "character and appearance" of the area, not just the appearance. There is no need to consider character and appearance separately but it is clear that, together, the words go beyond mere appearance.

Upholding the appeal, and reinstating the inspector's decision, Sir Keith Lindblom found that the inspector's use of the term "street scene" did not indicate that he had focused exclusively on the development's visual impact.

*Sir Keith, who was sitting with Lords Justice Lewis and Nugee, added: "The inspector was able to reach these conclusions in spite of the fact that there would be **no material, change to the exterior of the building itself** The judge concluded: "The inspector was concerned to establish the effect of the proposed development not merely on the 'appearance of the area', but on the '**character** and appearance of the area'.*

It is a concept that extends to considerations of 'character' as well as to those of 'appearance.

This is a rural area in the Green Belt and one of the two Green Routes in the Wargrave Parish

Work has already been carried out to change the interior of the house into flats and this is a retrospective application.

Work to reconsider the rooms' re-arrangements and insert new doors to the property was done during 2023. In 2024 there suddenly appeared 11 black bins at the entrance to Copper Beeches.

Below is a photo of the bins which are stored at the entrance of the property – which is a shared access. They are clearly visible and unsightly - and can be seen from the road which is a Green Route. This will be further exacerbated when the bins are put out – then in clear view – at the front of the property for collection sometimes days before the collection date – as is common past experience. This also happens with the green bags, and we will have to look at these for days before they are taken back to just inside the entrance as has been common practice from residents of the flats at this rented property. One green bag at the entrance has been placed the day after collection and now awaits collection two weeks later. Everyone is used to seeing the bins out on the roadside the night before collection, but to have 11 bins all together for one site in a Green Belt rural residential area is harm to the neighbouring community and harm to the Green Belt and this beautiful Green Route.

We have been fortunate as at today's date as only a small number of bins have been put out each week but when the flats are fully occupied all these bins on the roadside will be so detrimental to both the environment and the Green Belt.

We unfortunately must look at all the unsightly 11 bins every time we access/egress our property.

This is an unacceptable harm to the neighbouring amenities and the Green Belt.



The fear of crime does undermine the quality of life for the community.

I note the applicant's submission states:

f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Unfortunately, during the time for 'rooms to rent' when the property was converted into bedrooms for rent, in Copper Beeches, there was no responsible person living in the property and there were too many incidents when the police/ambulance were called. This has resulted in numerous incidents with the police involvement, border police involvement and ambulances calling. As neighbours we are well aware of many incidents that have taken place – from a stabbing – when a woman was heard from inside our home, screaming 'you have stabbed me' before police attended, to police attending for drug related issues i.e. man died etc. to border police attending as one/two/three? of the rooms were used for a brothel, to police attending and removing cars, to theft from our garage and information from the applicant that he knew who did it as he was living in the property - and the list goes on.

We are concerned that all these flats are not going to be privately owned but for rent and yet again, with no responsible person living on site to ensure our fear of crime is negated.

Council Tax

Council tax for the many of the previous rented rooms in the house has been paid for by the council and therefore it has been in the owner's interest to register the rooms rented for council tax. Hence, we have seen the rooms listed for council tax over the years.

This, however, does not mean that planning permission has been gained for these rooms/flats to rent.

Appeal Ref: -Dismissed - APP/X0360/W/17/3181864 Copper Beeches, Bath Road, Knowl Hill, Reading, RG10 9UT.

The appellant says that the main property was converted into self-contained flats in 2006 but in the absence of a certificate of lawfulness this is disputed by the Council.

In application 200436 – Refused- Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of one detached 5 no. bedroom chalet-style dwelling following demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuilding and retention of two separate dwellings.

The officer stated ‘in considering the 2019 appeal, the Inspector concluded that the existing structures and plot layout read as one single dwelling standing in extensive grounds’

According to the Valuation office, 9 properties were listed in April 2024 for Council Tax. This was when the applicants had converted the property and over a year before they applied for this planning permission.

This is the same tactic made before applying for the two CLU’s on two other properties – garage and shed at rear.

I note from the plans there are several access doors inserted on the ground floor.

Having the waste bins/bags adjacent to the property is common practice along the Green Route on the A4 which maintains the beauty of this verdant road.

If permission is given, I would ask for a condition that the bins/green bags are removed from the entrance and placed nearer to the property in the interest of protecting the Green Belt and the Green Route.

Regards

Mr and Mrs Hunt