

Brian Page

Brian Page (Ponders End, Goring Road, Woodcote) statement for the Planning committee meeting on 01st July, 2020.

Reference planning application P19/S4457/FUL The Hollies, Goring Road, Woodcote.

Date 26th June, 2020

After reading the planning officers report recommending the grant of planning permission for this application I have to state that I am concerned at his arbitrary decisions to ignore the requirements of the applicable planning policies and design guides. (The SOCS, the SOLP, the WNP and the SODG should all be applied to this planning application). My comments relating to this report are as follows:

- (1) My first point is that these policies and guides are either complied with or not. In the planning officers report he continually mentions and excuses “minor infringements “ or “shortfalls” – which is a concept I cannot agree with. The application either complies with the requirements or not. If the application does not fully comply with the requirements it should be refused on principle. There is no such thing as a “minor infringement” if it does not comply it should be classed as unacceptable.

Why are these policies and guides in place if they can be arbitrarily ignored?

- (2) My second point relates to ignoring the SODG distance requirements. In sections 6.17 to 6.20 of the report the planning officer relates to the Design Guide distance requirements with regard to first floor window distances rather than the habitable ground floor rooms so he is not applying the requirements of the SODG correctly for the houses on plots 3 & 4 with regards to the required distances to the West Chiltern houses in particular, as well as to The Hawthorne’s and Ponders End. He states there are “minor shortfalls” in the separation distances (even using his wrong interpretation of the guide – which he attempts to justify in his comments by referring to rear extensions commonly not meeting these requirements in built up areas –which is irrelevant to this planning application which should be dealt with on the current build situation. Again an arbitrary amendment to the actual requirements despite the application not agreeing with the required guidance, I feel that this is not acceptable. I also dispute a number of distances that are quoted in the report. With regard to his quoted distances to Ponders End, the stated distance is 24.2 metres to a first floor bedroom and completely ignores two ground floor habitable rooms, one of which has in the past been utilised as a downstairs bedroom. The correct measurement to a habitable room is no more than 21 to 22 metres, so the distances quoted in the report seem to be picked to suit the argument being proposed, this is not acceptable.

If the separation distances cannot be met, the proposed buildings should be reduced in size until the regulations and guides are complied with.

- (3) My third point relates to the current and future traffic movements on the access road. The planning officer states that the access road and some parking facilities are already existing and have been in use for a number of years which is correct. We (Brian & Janet Page) moved into Ponders End next to The Hollies 35 years ago and there has been no noticeable traffic movements relating to the rear barn building during that period. We understand that the rear building was originally built as a Battery Hen facility over 50 years ago, but except for

storage purposes it has not been used for business purposes for the last 25 years or more. The total traffic movements to The Hollies site during our period of occupation of Ponders End have always been very low and virtually unnoticed by us. To state in section 6.21 that the very limited traffic movements related to plots 3 & 4 would not have a material impact on the amenity of the adjoining occupiers is a complete misrepresentation of the current and future situation and is not acceptable or correct.

The related traffic on the access road will be for plots 3 & 4 plus visitors to all four houses and the related rear visitor parking spaces – a total of seven parking spaces plus access to all Hollies site traffic that needs to use the turn round facility. So it will not be “very Limited” as stated in the planning officer’s report, it will be a major increase of vehicle movements and the related noise, vehicle fumes, etc will definitely have an adverse impact on our amenities.

- (4) My fourth point is that the planning officer has completely rejected any objection that relates to the backland development of plots 3 & 4 affecting the privacy of the adjoining neighbours and thus not be in agreement with policy H10 of the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan. The fact that the size of the houses on the backland plots 3 & 4 are unable to meet the separation distances of the SODG mean that they will obviously intrude on the adjoining neighbour’s privacy simply due to their proximity to the existing houses. The planning application as presented does not comply with the WNB policy H10.
- (5) Finally throughout the report the planning officer quotes recent guidance from the National Planning Policy Framework where it supports arguments to ignore or overrule the requirements specified in the Woodcote Neighbourhood plan, the SOLP and SODG guidance. However Paragraph 12 on page 7 of the NPPF states as follows:

“The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed”

In conclusion I think the planning officer has not given enough weight to the WNP in reaching his decision and has made a number of factual judgements to justify ignoring or overruling the WNP requirements. These judgements can and should be challenged.

I submit this statement to be presented at the SODC Planning Committee meeting on the 1st July 2020.

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