

Michael and Pauline Draper

Written statement from Michael and Pauline Draper 47, West Chiltern, Woodcote 27 June 2020

Planning Application P19/S4457/FUL at The Hollies, Goring Road, Woodcote

We have four comments and observations that we would like to make to augment our previous objections (30 Dec 2019 and 28 Mar 2020) to this application.

1. We are of the opinion that had this application been limited to the demolition of the existing property (The Hollies) and its replacement with one or two appropriately sized properties fronting Goring Road there would have been significantly less objection/comment. However the fact that the application also proposes adding an additional two 3 bed, two storey properties in the existing "garden", which therefore impinge upon the privacy of existing surrounding properties, is a major issue and cause for objection.
The SODC Planning Officer now says he is minded to approve such backland development, which is not compliant with the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan (WNP). This sets a significant and worrying precedent for the nature and development of Woodcote Village as a whole, not to mention other villages (with Neighbourhood Plans) within South Oxfordshire.
The current application as it stands should be rejected.
2. At several points in the Planning Officer's Report (dated 1 Jul 2020) there is an implication that the South Oxfordshire Local Plan (SOLP) and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) somehow supersede or take precedence over the WNP and its requirements/recommendations.

On the Gov.uk website the Neighbourhood Planning System is explained in some detail. Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 41-006-20190509 states:

A neighbourhood plan attains the same legal status as a local plan (and other documents that form part of the statutory development plan) once it has been approved at a referendum. At this point it comes into force as part of the statutory development plan. Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise

NOTE: The Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan was formally made part of the council's development plan by South Oxfordshire District Council on 15 May 2014. (SODC website)

Also on the Gov.uk website there is a section explaining the NPPF. Under the section entitled "Achieving sustainable development" Paragraph 12 includes:

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.

To our mind this indicates that the WNP must be considered in all matters arising to local planning and **this application should be rejected** as it conflicts with WNP in several respects.

3. The Planning Officer originally commented to Anderson Orr on 15 Mar 2019 that the South Oxfordshire Design Guide (SODG) advocates a minimum distance of *at least* 25 metres between habitable rooms in adjacent properties and that WNP require that any development does not negatively impact the amenities of neighbouring occupants including but not limited to privacy. He also stated that the inter-building gaps, at that time 23 metres, needed to be increased or that there was insufficient space to accommodate the development as proposed.

The Planning Officer's report is now referring to the distance from West Chiltern properties to the upper floor of Plots 3 and 4 as a way of justifying the reduced ground floor distances as a "shortfall". The SODG however clearly states that 25 metres is the minimum distance between habitable rooms ... which would typically mean ground floor to ground floor.

Our comments of 28 March (still visible on the Planning Portal) are as follows

We calculate that Plot 4 is only 21.3 metres from the south east corner of Ponders End and only 21.6 metres from 44, West Chiltern – significantly short of the minimum SODC requirement of 25 metres.

We also calculate that Plot 3 is only 22.5 metres from the south west corner of Hawthornes and 21.7 metres from the corner of 47 West Chiltern. This is actually closer than the initial submission of December 2019.

This application should be rejected.

4. The NPPF ("Determining applications" Para 14) states that when determining applications:
Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing.

The SODC Planning Portal states that the Government has set a target of determining 65% of Minor planning applications within eight weeks of registration, SODC state that their target is even higher at 83%

The initial submission of P19/S4457/FUL was made on 6 Dec 2019, the Planning Portal indicates that Woodcote Parish Council (WPC) and ten local residents objected before the 10 Jan 2020 deadline ... the Planning Department made no public comment (even though the Portal indicated a target date of 31 Jan 2020).

The second submission of P19/S4457/FUL was made on 13 Mar 2020, once more WPC and nine residents objected before the 3 Apr 2020 deadline. The Planning Department again made no public comment until they advised on 22 Jun 2020 that they were recommending approval to the 1 July 2020 Planning Committee.

By delaying any decision - as they have done twice – the Planning Department allows the developer to modify and re-submit their application, but this leaves the WPC and residents with no feedback from the planners for over 21 weeks. Not only is this well beyond government targets it is not the sort of service we should expect from our local planning department, especially given that objectors were given less than 1 week to comment before this Planning Committee meeting.