



Land South of Kingfield Road and East of Westfield Avenue, Woking, Surrey,
GU22 9PF.

Appeal by Goldev Woking Ltd - LPA Ref: PLAN/2019/1176

PINS Reference: APP/A3655/W/20/3265969

South Woking Action Group:

Proof of Evidence of Andrew Caulfield – April 2021

SUMMARY

1. I am Andrew Caulfield. I have lived in Woking for 30 years. Residents' concerns about Goldev's proposals grew from July 2019 following initial presentations. I was elected on to the SWAG Committee (as Chair) and we began our efforts to work on residents behalfs with Club, Council and developer to find a better solution.
2. In this case I am presenting evidence as a local resident on behalf of SWAG. I address the positions of each of the following:
 - (a) Residents
 - (b) Woking BC
 - (c) Woking FC
 - (d) The Developer
3. **Residents** The way this whole matter has been handled is extremely disappointing to residents. Generally, there was no proper consultation, where residents' concerns could be properly considered and dealt with about a range of matters such as size, bulk, mass, height of towers and overall development, density and size of proposed accommodation, loss of light and privacy, the overbearing nature of the tower blocks, poor design and impact on the local street scene and being wholly out of keeping with the character of the surrounding area. Also, proper traffic flow analysis and parking (both residential and match day/ stadium users) appear to have been glossed over.
4. **Woking BC** From summer 2019, we made contact as widely as possible with the Council. We had major concerns about the secrecy we encountered for many months, and then the true scale of many issues became clear once all papers were finally released in late 2019. The Council's own cross-party Overview & Scrutiny Committee shared our concerns and began an investigation. Its report of summer 2020 led to a senior LGA lawyer being appointed to write an Independent report in December 2020, which was damning and highly critical of so many aspects of the way the Council had acted on this project:

<https://www.getsurrey.co.uk/news/surrey-news/woking-borough-council-kept-football-19606969>

5. We note that Woking Council is on track to deliver its current housing obligations without this site by 2027. As the planning inspector in the almost finalised site allocation inquiry found, this site (UA44) is neither town centre (so the planning inspector decision in the recent Poole Road appeal applies) nor a suitable out of town area suitable for a major development, and is now recommended by WBC for 93 dwellings only. Residents welcome this as a vindication for all we have said for at least the past 2 years.

6. **Woking FC** The Club was in a difficult position as they needed funding to secure its future, and to deal with dilapidated parts of their current ground (particularly the very old stands and areas along Westfield Avenue). As SWAG became aware of more information, it became increasingly apparent that the entire premise of this huge project – to secure the Club’s future and help it to become a sustainable entity going forward – was materially flawed in many respects, both financially and in terms of ownership, control and future location.

7. **The Developer** After initial contact with Wayne Gold in July 2019, all our subsequent efforts to meet and discuss residents’ numerous concerns were met by complete silence from him. We heard nothing further until suddenly out of the blue in mid-October 2020 Wayne Gold emailed us asking to meet. He made very clear his preference was a new smaller development, rather than this original one. We made clear that for any new plan to work, the developer, Club and Council would need to work together (as they clearly did for the original application) in order to achieve a sensible outcome for all parties, including residents. Unfortunately due to this appeal, and evident ongoing tensions between Club and developer this has not materialised and the **outline plans** only submitted by another Goldev company for the smaller scheme do not attract residents’ support. As the whole rationale of SWAG is to work with all parties to find the best solution for each of us - Club, Council, residents and developers - we still hope that this may be achievable at some stage going forward.

8. **Conclusion** This appeal should respectfully not be allowed for all the valid planning regulation breaches identified by the LPA in making its original decision to refuse; also frankly no one any longer appears to want the original development – local residents; Woking BC; Woking FC; and indeed developers themselves– Dukelease having split with Mr Gold/Goldev and having no further involvement, and Wayne Gold himself regularly stating: “He [Wayne Gold] repeated earlier commitments to drop the appeal if the smaller scheme is considered to be viable” <https://www.wokingnewsandmail.co.uk/?p=29911>

Andrew Caulfield - April 2021