

Comments for Planning Application PLAN/2020/0568

Application Summary

Application Number: PLAN/2020/0568

Address: Land To The North And South Of Goldsworth Road Woking Surrey GU21 6JT

Proposal: Demolition of all existing buildings and redevelopment of the site for a phased mixed-use scheme, comprising 929 residential units (Class C3), communal residential and operational spaces, commercial uses (Classes A1/A2/A3/A4/B1/D1/D2) at ground floor and homeless shelter (sui generis) within 5 blocks of varying heights of between 9 and 37 storeys (including rooftop amenity) to the north and south sides of the site together with soft and hard landscaping including public realm works, highway alterations to Goldsworth Road, car parking, cycle parking, bin storage, ancillary facilities and plant (Environmental Statement submitted) (amended plans and reports received 13.11.2020).

Case Officer: Brooke Bougnague

Customer Details

Name: Mr David Robbins

Address: Lindisfarne, Heath Road, Horsell Woking, Surrey GU21 4DT

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Resident (local res.- member of public)

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

- High-over density of development
- Highway reasons - parking
- Impact of development
- Loss of privacy
- Out of Character
- Overlooking

Comment: This is in addition to my objection dated 20 July. The reduction of the highest tower by 4 storeys does not meet my objections for the following reasons:

1. The new height has only a single rationale based on a historical scheme dating from 2016. It does nothing to dent the excessive mass and overdevelopment of this proposal and its impact on the whole town.
2. I have conceded that the concept of using high residential towers was found acceptable by Woking's Planning Committee in the case of the Victoria Square development. The main building in the Square is a residential tower of 34 stories. This building has become the central core of the new town scene. To be a flagship building, with the neighbouring hotel, it needs to be head and shoulders above the surrounding built form. The idea of a 'dome' of high buildings, proposed by the Applicant, has no logic visually or on any other basis. It is merely a constructed rationale dreamed up by the Developer to justify this Plan. Buildings within 200m of Victoria Square

therefore should be no higher than 24 storeys, reducing or scaling down from that point to the surrounding areas which are commonly no higher than four storeys. By reducing the future towers accordingly, one would remove the looming nature of the buildings and reduce the light shading and wind impacts. By doing this, one makes sense of the proposed design of the street scene by reducing that dark feel of an area slung at the bottom of a deep valley to an airy space in which people may want to sit and relax with a coffee.

3. The lack of affordable housing has not been dealt with by the new plans and I do not think the viability study, which is impossible to check, should trump the clear wishes of WBC in its Site Allocation Document to secure up to 40% of the redevelopment of this site for affordable housing.

4. The Council has suggested that this type of development is to take the place of general development in the Borough so that the Green Belt can be preserved. However 59% of the new flats in this development is one bed or studio accommodation which does not provide the mix of residences deemed appropriate in the Core Strategy.

5. No attempt has been made to distinguish this proposal from the plans for the towers in Church Street East both of which have been turned down by the Planning Committee by a huge majority.

6. The impact of Victoria Square is far worse than most residents anticipated so it behoves the Planning Committee, in so far as it can, to reduce the impact of further massive buildings by providing a bridge down from the peak height to surrounding levels so that the overall impact is thereby softened.

7. The new photo-montages of this plan now attached to the documents shows the immense visual impact of the towers on the surrounding areas of housing. This can only be minimised by reducing the height and mass of these developments.

8. The planners should be reminded that the fact WBC has invested in a new 'power station' to provide heat to this new building should not be a reason for giving approval to this overdevelopment.

9. This application should be turned down so that the developers and Woking can assess the success of the Victoria Square development financially and socially and have a clearer idea of the Government's plans for the planning system, not to mention the potential impacts of Covid 19, Brexit and the Grenfell Tower enquiry. Add to this it is the avowed intention of the new Council Leader to listen and consult the residents generally on the plans for the town centre which has been engendered by the serious local objections to the blocks which have been built and the threat of many more enormous buildings in our small town.

10. There seem to be sufficient good planning reasons for turning down this application so the risk of an adverse costs award against WBC on an appeal should not be a concern.