

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 965 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 40 storeys (plus 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).

Case Officer: Brooke Bougnague

Customer Details

Name: Mr Paul Sharp

Address: Bar Am, Elm Road, Woking, Surrey GU21 7PA

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

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

Comment: I certainly think that this is a part of the town that would benefit from being re-developed, but in a sympathetic way in particular giving due consideration to the nearby residential areas to the west of the town centre. I object to the proposal presented for the following reasons:

1. Height

The height at 40 storeys is far too tall and will totally dominate the town centre and surrounding residential areas. No case has been put forward for a more realistic height of 20 storeys or less. The increased density of very tall buildings in this area will be oppressive for the surrounding residential areas. This will be a blight on the landscape; already the existing developments are visible from miles away.

2. Density

The housing density is far too high and is well in the category of super-density. This is surely not the sort of environment we should be creating in the 21st Century - have we not learned from the mistakes of the previous developments in the 60's and 70's? for example, similar developments in

central London and various 'New Towns'

3. Affordable Housing

Again, a tenuous analysis for why only 5% affordable housing can be provided (compared to the Council requirement of 40%). Note the viability analysis includes a built-in profit for the developer of 20% of cost which is at the upper end of the typical range (15-20%). The reduction in profit with the provision of the affordable housing is modest (profit on cost % only reduces from 20.7 to 19.98) so it would seem there is scope for increasing the level of affordable housing and still leaving a reasonable profit margin. Also, I can see no discussion in either the Affordable Housing Statement or the Financial Viability Assessment of a financial contribution in lieu of providing the requisite (40%) level of affordable housing.

4. Parking/Transport

In the 2016 proposal there were 395 parking spaces for 560 units (0.7 spaces/unit). In this proposal there are 263 spaces for 965 flats (0.27 spaces/unit). This is an effective reduction of 60% in the available parking spaces for the dwellings.

A development of this scale will likely extend the disruption to the A320 through the town centre for several more years which is unfair on the local community who have already suffered several years of disruption.

Overall comments

This proposal has many of the hallmarks of the developments at the other end of town (81 Commercial Way and Crown Place) which were rejected earlier this year - too tall, too dense, not enough affordable housing, not enough parking.

All in all, this feels to me more like investment properties than housing that truly meet the needs of the local community.

Finally, could I ask (again) that developers be required to produce a clear summary of the key facts for the development rather than requiring people to wade through 100 odd documents.

Surely we should also be considering the potential future impact of Coronavirus. Will these people still want or need to commute into London on a regular basis as they do now? I can imagine more people will move further afield to find more attractive and more affordable housing and Woking may find itself to be not the attraction it once seemed to be pre-Covid and could end up being a blighted town full of empty apartments! A long pause for thought may be needed here.