

RESPONSE TO PLANNING APPLICATION 211777: TOUTLEY EAST

The Executive Committee of the Wokingham Society notes the responses in the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) to the concerns it raised at the consultation stage but nonetheless wishes to object to the proposed development at Toutley East as follows:

1. Overdevelopment

We still maintain that this would constitute overdevelopment of North Wokingham. What is being lost is an area for low-density industrial activity, which would offer jobs in the locality. Instead there would be almost complete in-filling of North Wokingham with housing. When it presented its North Wokingham SDL Supplementary Planning Document the Borough Council assured residents and others that the total of about 1500 dwellings would suffice for the area and that attempts by developers to increase that provision would be resisted. Since then, approval has been given to additional developments at Bell Farm, Keephatch Beech and Ashridge Farm. In each case the Council regretted the need to agree the applications but pointed out that there were incidental gains in the form of SANGS and or sections of the distributor road. This location offers no planning gain but would merely add to the endless stretch of developments across the whole of the north side of the town, and thereby imposing further burdens on the local road and environmental infrastructure.

It is recognised that the Borough has to meet housing targets but the original draft Local Plan saw other ways of achieving this and those options should be pursued.

2. Proximity to motorway

A further argument against this location is that it would bring housing development in the area right next to the A329(M) motorway, and unreasonably near the M4. This became unavoidable in the eastern section of the SDL but there is no need for it at this location and very low density usage should be considered in preference to the building mass proposed in this application. The need to build awkward sound barriers would be avoided if another site were found; instead, the SCI and the DAS spend time explaining how noise transmission can be lessened, as if in recognition that unnecessary work and cost would be needed to avoid its intrusion.

3. Inappropriate location for dementia centre

While this location would be a poor aural environment for house residents because of the motorway, it would seem to us to be an intolerable one for those in a dementia centre, especially when they would otherwise be enjoying sitting

or walking in the centre's outside space. Indeed, there appears to be no facility for residents to walk and exercise outside the home, with reference only to internal 'courts', reminiscent of prison exercise yards.

We hope that the Council can find some better location for this facility.

4. Unsafe access/exit

The Transport Assessment states that the visibility of the ghost turn into the development would be sub-optimal ("one step below") and that a footpath on the western side of the Twyford Road would be undeliverable. These are not satisfactory outcomes and would be unnecessary were the site to retain the assigned industrial use.

5. Public Art

It is essential that the opportunity be taken to require provision of public art on this site, as has been required for the South Wokingham development. This was not done in earlier parts of the North Wokingham SDL but it is not too late to start here.

Peter Must

27 June 2021