

RESPONSE TO PLANNING APPLICATION NO.203544: ST. ANNE'S DRIVE DEVELOPMENT

I am submitting the following objection on behalf of the Executive Committee of the Wokingham Society:

1. As with the first application and with the earlier version of this one, the applicant has held no public consultations of any sort, and therefore has failed to include a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), as required for a major development. The application should be rejected and the developer told that public consultation followed by a SCI is necessary.
2. The site is not identified for development within the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location Supplementary Planning Document and is thus presented as green space to offset the extent of housing proposed for the SDL. Wokingham Borough has sufficient land supply for its five-year target and there is no need to use unallocated land close to the boundary with Bracknell Forest Borough to add to that supply.
3. Unlike the Keephatch Gardens and Ashridge Farm developments, which have contributed to the delivery of the North Wokingham Distributor Road, this application offers no compensating gain in infrastructure provision and therefore represents no benefit to the local community.
4. It is greatly to be regretted that, despite by definition being within the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location, this proposed development is not connected in with the rest of the SDL by road or settlement. The only linkage is across the Buckhurst Meadow SANG. Without such connectivity this would be an isolated development lacking direct access to local communities and facilities.
5. It is, in that respect, also unfortunate that the development would not be directly connected to William Heelas Way so that access to and from London Road could use the existing South Wokingham Distributor Road (SWDR) rather than having to create a further turning onto an already busy London Road.
6. Although not furnishing grounds for rejection, it is sad that a local planning practice based in Wokingham town centre makes so many mistakes in the Design and Access Statement, and has not picked up our comments about this in our earlier response. The town centre does not have “numerous large supermarkets” (it has two); the town does not have “an abundance of GP Surgeries and Clinics” (there are three, which are all over-subscribed); William Heelas (after whom the distributor road near the proposed development is named) did not set up his drapery business “during the late 17th century” (it was the late 18th century); the town does not centre “around a number of market squares and pedestrianised streets” (there is one market place and no pedestrianised streets); and the purported 1800 map is actually of a late 19thC origin, showing the two railway lines built in the middle of the century.

Peter Must
Chairman, The Wokingham Society

10 July 2021