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Sent: 24 February 2023 10:55  
To: Town Planning  
Subject: Objection to PA 2022/3796, site at 16-18 Oatlands Drive, Weybridge

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Re: Planning Application 2022 / 3796  
Site at 16 – 18 Oatlands Drive, Weybridge  
Objection

This application 2022/3796 to build 33 flats at 16 – 18 Oatlands Drive is the third part of what appears to be a trilogy of deception by these developers. They even used different company names on each application (The Ridge LLP / The Bridge (Oatlands) LLP / The Ridge (Oatlands) LLP) to conceal what they were really doing.

It seems they may well have deceived Elmbridge Council, the Planning Inspectorate and also local residents with a deliberate ploy to conceal the true objective and extent of this over-sized development project. May this not be construed as a dishonest “modus operandi”?

We object strongly to this planning application but wish to make the point that it should not be considered as a stand-alone application.

Thus far the following applications have been submitted by these developers:

2020/0691 and 2020/3223 concerning house nos. 8 – 14 (construction of 51 flats underway)  
2022/2118 concerning nos. 4-6 (application for 27 flats still under consideration) and  
2022/3796 concerning nos. 16 – 18 (current application for 33 flats)

The applications have been submitted separately, at different times, but clearly the intention from the outset (i.e. the first “public consultation” in January 2019) was the redevelopment of EIGHT properties, not four. This intention was concealed from all the parties involved in making the decisions on the applications, as well as from Elmbridge residents. How can this be considered working with the local community?

The developers should not be allowed to have it both ways. If they submit separate applications for the three separate site areas then each site surely must, by definition, be viable as a stand-alone development. Yet in linking these separate applications together via the supporting documentation (e.g. the proposed street scenes shown in this application and the shared access / egress point for the sites at 8 – 14 and 4 – 6) the developers have negated this argument. The plans that support application 2022/3796 prove beyond doubt that, in truth, this is not a stand-alone application; permission is being sought for a total of 111 flats housed in eight very large blocks.

The full extent of this large project is now abundantly clear. The real overall picture comprises 111 flats in eight blocks on a site area of 1.2 hectares. This equates to a density of 92.5 dph, an almost 14-fold increase on what was there before. The hardscaping across the entire site will be so extensive that virtually no useable amenity space will remain.

Eight blocks of flats in this location will create a behemoth that will utterly dominate the detached family houses around it. The Planning Inspector's conclusion in 2021 (whether or not one agreed with it) was that the development at 8 – 14 could be accommodated within the character of its surroundings. It is highly doubtful that he would have reached this conclusion had the developers set out the true extent of their intentions honestly from the beginning.

Such a large flatted development would have a devastatingly negative impact upon the character of this part of Elmbridge; in fact it would change the aspect of this borough as seen from Walton Bridge and Spelthorne from a green and leafy place to that of an inner city location. For this reason, had the developers applied for permission for 111 flats initially, the application may well have been refused at all stages of the planning process.

The strategy employed by the developers may be legal but to us it appears underhand and grossly unfair – maybe even unethical - not only to Elmbridge Council but also to the residents of this area who would have to live with an over-sized development blighting their neighbourhood. The end result will be the same behemoth, whether it is constructed in three stages, or in one.

Notwithstanding the above, our specific objections to this single application 2022/3796 may be summed up as follows:

- The proposed buildings are far too large and bulky for the site
- They do not respect the character of the surrounding detached houses and their design would severely impact the privacy of neighbouring residents
- Together with the 51 flats already under construction next door they would change this important part of Elmbridge (i.e. one of the main entrances to the borough) from a green landscape to a vista dominated by soulless blocks of flats, more akin to an inner city location
- There is too much hardscaping and far too little (if any) useable amenity space in the design
- The 33 proposed luxury flats with a high service charge do not address the real housing need in Elmbridge, which is for affordable housing and smaller family homes with garden areas
- The loss of these garden areas would impact severely the wildlife that currently thrives there, and would have a negative impact on biodiversity
- The vehicle movements associated with another 33 flats in this location would cause further disruption and danger on this extremely busy section of Oatlands Drive, with its close proximity to the congested Walton Bridge junction. Two access / egress points so close together (from this site and 8 – 14 next door) would cause further congestion and create risk of accidents
- The increase in density from 5.7 dph to 94.3 dph on this particular site is gross and excessive – a 16.5 fold increase on what was there before. This is not “gentle densification” as recommended by Michael Gove MP in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill currently before Parliament (December 2022). This application represents gross over-development

- It would mean the loss of two more gardens from the green corridor that runs between the houses on Oatlands Drive and Cowey Sale. The eyesore created by the loss of the four gardens at nos. 8 – 14 shows the result of such insensitive development. These are mature gardens that are irreplaceable. The Dec 2022 government bill, mentioned above, calls for “...beautiful new developments...that reflect community views and enhance protection for our precious environmental and heritage assets.” These gardens are indisputably precious environmental assets and should therefore be protected from unscrupulous and insensitive development
- The loss of these family homes with their unique garden areas would deprive families in future, who may be aspiring to own such properties, of the opportunity to enjoy them. Properties such as these in Elmbridge are becoming increasingly rare
- The strategy employed by these developers to achieve their objectives have shown little or no regard for the local council or community. The “public consultations” arranged by them as “tick-box” exercises were cynical and meaningless; there was clearly no intention of listening to local residents or investigating what might be acceptable to the local community.

We ask you to refuse this application and to do everything possible to prevent the character of this part of Elmbridge being destroyed by this wholly unsuitable and greedy over-development. The borough does not need more luxury flats but should be doing everything possible to preserve its intermediate-sized detached properties with outside space, to which so many young families aspire.

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