

OBJECTION

I would like to strongly object to the above planning application.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

As well as considering this application in isolation, on its own merits, I would also like to provide relevant context as the same developer – The Ridge (Oatlands) LLP has submitted a series of ‘piggy-back’ applications along this residential street (4-6/8-14/16-18 Oatlands Drive). Combined, this will mean that, from the street-scene, 8 detached dwellings will, alarmingly, be replaced by 111 flats comprising 8 - 3, 4 and 5 storey blocks.

Residents and visitors familiar with the area will already have noticed a radical change in the street scene where four large blocks of apartments at 8 -14 Oatlands Drive, have replaced four detached homes. Elmbridge received 214 objections to this proposed development which comprises of 51 apartments (application **2020/0691 & 2022/3223**). The scheme was refused planning consent by Elmbridge Borough Council, but unfortunately it was permitted by the Planning Inspector on appeal.



The Inspector considered that this **development would not adversely impact the character of the area**, however this was for a single planning application site, in isolation, with landscaping.

Application [2022/2118](#) include plans to demolish numbers 4 – 6 Oatlands Drive and replace with two blocks comprising 27 apartments. Comments were due by 2nd February, but objections were still being sent into Elmbridge Borough Council after this date, which reflects the strength of feeling about these ‘linked’ developments, almost identical in design. It is proposed that 8 – 14 and 4 – 6 will have shared access and servicing road (so no viable independent access).

Application [2022/3796](#) Plans to demolish numbers 16 – 18 Oatlands Drive (the two houses next to the current development) and replace with almost identical blocks to 8-14 and 4-6, two blocks comprising 33 apartments.

Also, an earlier, relevant CALA Planning Application (2007/0841) for the demolition of 4-18 Oatlands Drive to be replaced with a mixed development of 50 apartments and houses (with 40% 'affordable') was refused by EBC as it "would result in an inappropriate form of development as a direct result of its design, scale, massing, height and siting." The development was also dismissed on Appeal and the Inspector concluded that "harm results from seeking to place too much development on a site that has constraints in terms of location, landform and trees".

OUT OF CHARACTER & APPEARANCE WITH THE IMMEDIATE AREA

Plans now to include 8-14, 4-6, and 16-18 Oatlands Drive with 111 flats constitutes an overbearing, sprawling, opportunistic development, which in design, scale, massing, height and siting would adversely affect the character of this residential (non-urban) area for residents and completely change this part of Weybridge. It will also change the character of Walton itself and the views/character of Walton Bridge. Spelthorne Council have objected to 8 – 14 and 4 – 6 on the basis that:

"The siting of the four storey buildings close to the western boundary of the site would be conspicuous from the adjoining Green Belt located within the Borough of Spelthorne and would harm the visual amenities of that area. This Council also objects to the loss of trees adjoining the Green Belt Boundary not only because of their own amenity value but also for the screening role they would perform."

Indeed 8 – 14 has indeed turned out to be conspicuous and highly visible to residents as would the developments at 4 – 6 and 16 - 18. Before this build, along this stretch, residents saw glimpses of houses with rolling gardens, gardens awash with established trees and greenery. The views have been completely spoilt for walkers and visitors and further proposed development at 4 – 6 and 16 -18 will further damage views, the natural environment and enjoyment for residents including walkers.



Photographs of the rear/lower block at 8 – 14 Oatlands Drive.

OUT OF CHARACTER & APPEARANCE WITH THE IMMEDIATE AREA (CONTINUED)

Specific to this application (2022/3796), I would like to also like to object on the following grounds:

The properties at 16 – 18 are well set back from the road and fit in with the established building line and rhythm, which is very much characteristic of this part of Oatlands Drive. At the front of the properties, there are spacious drives and screening from the road is provided in the form of a brick wall (no. 18) and trees, shrubs and greenery. Such frontages are also characteristic of houses along this stretch of Oatlands Drive and create a sense of “openness”.

Under Supporting Documents (Design and Access Statement/Design Response/Building Line/Streetscene), the applicant notes that:

“The general feel of the street-scene is established but incoherent and contributes little to the street environment.”

However, this IS the character of this section of Oatlands Drive.



Current street scene at 16 and 18 Oatlands Drive

The proposed 3-story building fronting onto Oatlands Drive would be completely at odds with the current site and surrounding setting. It will be dominating in height, width and mass, and particularly in relation to the smaller, lower detached house at 20 Oatlands Drive. There will be little room for greenery at the front, which would be in keeping with adjacent properties.

Overall, this proposed development will have a detrimental appearance at this part of Oatlands Drive and will not positively improve local character.

Furthermore, Block B of the proposed development is a ‘backland development’. To the North of Oatlands Drive, the prominent prevailing character is detached houses with deep gardens. Surely, we should not encourage the principal of “backland” developments in Elmbridge which are adjacent to single dwellinghouses.

This proposed development is at odds with Policy DM2 of the Elmbridge Management Plan (2015) (DMP) which “requires proposals to be based on an understanding of local character”.

Incidentally, under the submitted Plans (existing and proposed street-scene), the roof of 20 Oatlands Drive is shown as being higher than that of number 18. This is not the case.



LOCATION

In the Planning Statement for 2022/3796 (Site and Surrounding Area), mention is made of the former Homebase site:

2.12 Opposite the Heart development, planning permission has been granted for the redevelopment of the former Homebase site, for a retirement living scheme providing 222 accommodation units with associated community facilities, in a building rising to a maximum height of eight storeys. The Inspector's decision notice, granting permission for the retirement living development, described the part of Walton in which the scheme is located, as a "distinctly urban, town centre location". The town centre, which is within walking distance of 16 - 18 Oatlands Drive, has a good range of shops and services and other facilities necessary for day-to-day living.

The Homebase site is indeed in a town centre area and 16 - 18 Oatlands Drive are within walking distance. However, it should be re-iterated that this section of Oatlands Drive (Weybridge) is distinctly residential; not in the town centre and the town centre cannot be seen from it. Oatlands Drive itself is a residential road and not distinctly urban in character and does not have "urban context".

UNACCEPTABLE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED DESIGN - BUILDINGS

This proposed development comprises 2 blocks of flats, 3 and 4-storey containing in total 33 dwellings. Block A will be located at the front of the site and Block B at the bottom of the existing gardens at 16 – 18.

In the Planning Statement (6.220) mention is made of the fact that the Inspector at appeal considered that the proposals for 8 – 14 "would reflect the scale and form of flatted developments elsewhere along Oatlands Drive on wider sites."

The applicant states (6.23) that:

"The proposal at 16-18 builds upon this principle. The height of Building A at the front of the site rises to two storeys above ground and one lower ground floor level. The proposed height is considered acceptable in this location given the scale and form of flatted developments along Oatlands Drive and Bridge Street, which now includes the directly adjacent scheme at 8 – 14. "

I would like to point out that the site at 16 -18 Oatlands Drive is much smaller and narrower and therefore I think it unreasonable to build upon this principle for 16 – 18. Also, in contrast, there are 4, 3-storey blocks being built at 8 -14 (51 flats): the proposal for this smaller site is for 33 flats in two blocks (and lower Block B is 4 storeys). If permitted, this development would be entirely overbearing and over dominant and completely destroy the character of this section of Oatlands Drive.

IMPACT ON NEIGHBOURING PROPERTY

This development will have significant and detrimental impact on the neighbouring property at 20 Oatlands Drive. This property is currently bordered by a single neighbour's garden (number 18). The proposed development is to replace one house with two large blocks of flats; include a

long access road sited alongside the house, with the access road leading to a central parking area providing sole access to all 33 apartments. This would have severely negative impacts on the peace and tranquility of the garden amenity and the associated noise, disturbance and light/pollution will be a grossly unfair intrusion.

In Section 6.36 of the Applicant's Planning Statement mention is made of the fact that *"The design seeks to limit or remove any potential overlooking issues, overshadowing, or changes in the privacy which is currently enjoyed"*.

I consider that this development would severely compromise the enjoyment of privacy and amenities at 20 Oatlands Drive.

OTHER ADVERSE AFFECTS

- Block A of the developments will be completely overshadow the much smaller property at 20 Oatlands Drive.
- The "backland" development (Block B) will not enhance the amenity or enjoyment for neighbours, in fact it will create light pollution from the front, rear and flanks as well as the lack of privacy from the front windows (which will be able to see into the second-floor windows of 20 Oatlands Drive). Currently, at 20 Oatlands Drive there are no lights at the back/from the garden at night. This proposed development (Block B), contrary to Policy DM2, would not preserve or enhance the amenity or enjoyment of existing neighbouring dwellings.
- In the Design Access Statement mention is made of roof terraces. Indeed, the plans seem to show that there are doors which outwardly open on to the terraced area. The roof terraces, particularly in Block B would overlook the gardens and property at 20 Oatlands Drive, which includes an outdoor private pool area. This would constitute a gross breach of privacy.*
- The proposed development in its totality will create significant noise pollution at any time of the day. This will have a hugely adverse effect in terms of health and quality of life for neighbours.
- The internal courtyard area, the number of cars/visitors with headlights on will create unwelcomed light and noise pollution not to mention air pollution coming from vehicles including those with engines running at the service delivery bay.
- The access and parking configuration will also have significant negative impact. The proposed driveway will run along the right side of 20 Oatlands Drive and will access an internal parking courtyard, proposing 32 parking spaces. This is out of keeping with the character of the area, with vehicles manoeuvring behind a build line.
- At this section of Oatlands Drive, we already have significant difficulty getting out of the drive, especially at peak times. Having the access road into 18 and 16 will make matters considerably worse (and potentially dangerous). There is also a pedestrian crossing in the vicinity and cycle route as well as the Ashley Close junction.

*My understanding from Elmbridge Borough Council is that side facing windows of any development are conditioned to be obscurely glazed and non-opening to prevent overlooking. Whilst the applicant has indicated that they would consider the use of obscure glazing, there is no requirement for them to do so and it seems that they are part of habitable rooms (not bathrooms). I note that in the application at 8 – 14, (2019/0691) obscure glazing was included in the initial plans (which were approved on appeal). I understand that a change order was subsequently submitted which removed the need for frosted glass.

It is stated in Protocol 1, Article 1 of the Human Right Act (Protection of property) that: “Every natural or legal person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions. No one shall be deprived of his possessions except in the public interest”.

I consider that this development, if approved, would deprive many Elmbridge residents and neighbours of their enjoyment of their properties/possessions.

IMPACT CONTINUED – TRAFFIC CONCERNS

As highlighted by many of the other objections, the increase in traffic and road safety should be a major factor when considering this application. Anyone that lives on Oatlands Drive (or uses this route) will know that the flow of traffic, particularly in the direction of Walton/Walton Bridge is heavily congested. There is regularly a bottle neck left into the left feeder road which takes traffic over Walton Bridge or by the river.

In the Consultation Response, Surrey County Council (Development Affecting Roads) it states:

“The use of the TRICS database and Census data is accepted by Surrey County Council acting as CHA, however it is appropriate to caveat both of these sources of information with appropriate weaknesses. The Census data is taken from the 2011 census and therefore is potentially up to 9 years out of date. The TRICS data is sourced from a wide variety of sites and locations and as such may not appear initially to be representative of the site in question. “

The letter from Surrey County Council in respect of 8 – 14 Oatlands Drive 2020/3223 was submitted on 5/1/21 and shows the same wording. In fact, in relation to 16 – 18 it is now 11 years out of date.

I find it unacceptable that Surrey County Council (Transport Development Planning) have not done an individual assessment/evaluation on the 16-18 application but instead used the comments from another application.

They further state *“The proposals are very similar in nature and layout but of a smaller scale than those already approved for the adjacent development at 8 -14 Oatlands Drive and the CHA therefore provides similar comments.”*

How many more flatted developments along Oatlands Drive and the environs does there have to be, before a proper road traffic assessment is carried out and up to date TRICS data? Since 2011 there have also been numerous developments in Walton and Weybridge. There has also been no consideration given to the introduction of ULEZ at Hampton Court. With the £12.50

charge it is likely that Walton Bridge will be a potential preferred cross-point over the River Thames.

NATURE AND HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

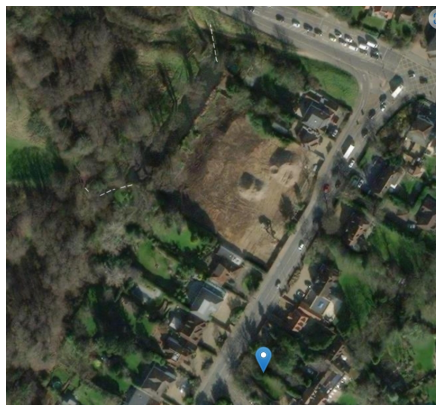
The houses at 16 -18 both have long rolling, abundant gardens with many large established plants, architectural planting and natural screening from the front, rear, sides and at the bottom. The back gardens are well screened which ensure privacy. Whilst there are plans to add planting to the limited green areas proposed for 16 -18, removing the large established trees, plants, shrubs and replacing them with buildings and hardscaping will have a hugely detrimental effect on biodiversity and the environment.

In December 2022 at the COP15 Conference, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres noted that “without nature we are nothing” and stated that humanity is “treating nature like a toilet” in reference to “the loss of nature and biodiversity”.

The series of proposed developments at Oatlands Drive would catastrophically change the nature of this part of Elmbridge – from a family orientated neighbourhood, with lots of green space, rich with flora and fauna and biodiversity to a series of large, dense blocks of flats with few outside amenities for residents.



Previous site at 8-14



Site after clearance at 8 -14

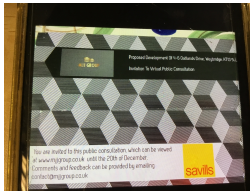
LACK OF PROPER CONSULTATION

Design Response

In support of 2022/3796, it is stated that there was a public consultation event in November 2022 and that it was ‘virtual’, due to Covid and safety considerations. There were no restrictions at this time, so why was there not a proper face to face consultation? I was not aware of this event and would have wished to participate, given that we are adjacent to the proposed development site.

A copy of this flyer was forwarded by another resident (referring to 4 -6 Oatlands Drive). It looks like a Savills flyer (we get dozens of speculative flyers from Estate Agents). Given the significant impact that these developments will have on local residents, I believe that a proper letter

should have been sent to residents along Oatlands Drive and that the consultation should have been for the combined sites.



In summary, this overdevelopment would have considerable negative effects on the character of the area as well as a significant detrimental impact on residents and neighbours.

It also seems at odds with the government's latest views as outlined in December 2022 by Michael Gove:

"If we are to deliver the new homes this country needs, new development must have the support of local communities. That requires people to know it will be beautiful, accompanied by the right infrastructure, approved democratically, that it will enhance the environment and create proper neighbourhoods."

The number and detail of the objections submitted against this application suggests that the proposed developments do not have the support of the local community. The proposed buildings will not enhance the environment and create proper neighbourhoods, it will destroy it.

I would therefore urge Elmbridge Borough Council to **refuse** this application.

Sharon Finch
20 Oatlands Drive, Weybridge