



Cobham Conservation & Heritage Trust

Registered Charity No: 1158625



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4th January 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

2023/2889 - Land Off Anyards Road and Copse Road Cobham Surrey KT11 2LH

The Cobham Conservation and Heritage Trust (the "Trust") writes to object to planning application 2023/2889 by Shanley Homes Ltd., to demolish the existing business premises with associated buildings and construct twenty-six new residential dwellings.

This application is a close cousin to the previous application 2021/3243, which the applicant withdrew after receiving widespread local opposition, probably "on advice". This application is far worse in that it now fails to preserve the business use of the main site but otherwise retains all the worst aspects of the previous application.

The Trust's main ground for objection as before is change of character – The proposed development would be out of character with this area of Cobham. This ground now has even more force following the updates to the NPPF and Elmbridge's emerging local plan with its design codes. These buildings would all be of a more modern style and be much higher than those around them. Building in the garden areas separating all these existing houses would also be "out of character." Not only would such be a loss of faith with all these neighbours, who have lived all these years with the assumption this would always be open space but also these new buildings with small gardens that would be distinctly incongruous. The density of dwellings involved is also an extreme departure from the existing built-form density.

The NPPF ("Achieving Well-designed Places," para 131) says the developer must focus on making "beautiful" and "sustainable" places, but this development would not result in either a beautiful or a sustainable place. The NPPF (para 133) also says that developments should follow "design policy, guidance and codes" but this development would not be consistent with the principles set out in any of the National Design Guide, the National Model Design Code, EBC's putative local design code - nor indeed would it reflect the existing local character and design preferences.

The Elmbridge Design Code aims to "reflect local character and design preferences." Quite obviously this design would not reflect that of "Street Cobham" (this area). EBC's SPD on the local character of Street Cobham says this area is of "late Victorian/Edwardian character comprising two-storey detached and semi-detached houses on modest plots." Not at all what the application is proposing. The NPPF (para 139) states that where the developer has failed to design well the LPA should refuse his application, "especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design."

Were the LPA to seriously consider such a development, then we would also say:

1. The plans would result in the loss of amenity for all the surrounding neighbours and cause them all to suffer from overlooking – not only their dwellings but also their prime amenity spaces. The developer could provide walls to mitigate all this, but, while that may be better, it would mean the neighbours all would then suffer from reduced views. There are also concerns about loss of light into these neighbour’s gardens that will cause harm – and walls would make this worse too. It is no wonder that the applicant has not produced landscaping plans and wants these to be a “reserved matter.” However, this cannot be right as EBC cannot properly appraise the scheme without these plans – this is a plot by the developer to defer this controversial issue. This development would result in this area becoming an urban concrete jungle - again out of character for the area.
2. The plans concerning vehicles are wide of the mark:
 - a. The developer proposes the Entrance near a dangerous fast corner off a main road.
 - b. The developer proposes the Entrance opposite that of the SCC’s Anyards Road assisted living accommodation – an unsuitable place for any increased traffic especially that turning in and out of this proposed development. EBC has a duty of care to provide extra visibility and additional space for safety reasons for this access to such a facility.
 - c. The developer proposes an Entrance far too narrow for such a large-scale development. The thought that the council would grant permission to widen the access road, and thus further reduce on-street parking, is unconscionable.
 - d. There is insufficient pavement here for the increased use.
 - e. The proposed parking provision is very inadequate. Thirty-six spaces for twenty-six flats.
 - f. This will exacerbate the already severe parking problems on Anyards Road and may lead to dangerous parking on Portsmouth Road. They may well also use the parking area for recreation ground visitors improperly depriving them of this right.
3. We note that the applicant removed trees from the site immediately before the original application. If they were still there these trees would now be subject to a temporary preservation order and the LPA would weigh the application merits against the loss of these trees. We suggest the LPA should still follow this approach - as if the trees were still in situ. The new NPPF has another important insertion, to say that, because trees make such an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, planning decisions should ensure that... “streets are tree-lined and that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments” and requires that “appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly planted trees and existing trees are retained wherever possible”.
4. This area already has a flooding problem: the water table is forever near the surface. It is not possible to “bury” the water in underground SUDS tanks as these will never drain - there will never be dry periods when the water table is low enough. EBC has a responsibility to take this matter much more seriously than a simple enquiry of Thames Water (“TW”) – after all TW always say yes and they have a distinct conflict of interest. In this case, even TW has been equivocal saying – “so long as a sequential approach is followed regarding surface water” (whatever that means) and no “too much surface water is discharged into the foul-sewer” that they have no objection!
5. Elmbridge’s latest SHMA shows the need for social rented housing in 1 and 2-bed units. This development is entirely for market housing for which less need is evident.
6. A development such as that proposed would normally be subject to an affordable housing and SAMM charge. The developer in this case has stated his intention to challenge these charges. He has provided a viability statement that claims this development would not generate sufficient profit for him to afford to pay these charges. Therefore, the LPA in weighing its planning judgement, cannot apply any weight to these contributions nor adjudge these units as being any contribution to the local housing needs.
7. The developer has provided no details as to how he will achieve this development without causing traffic and parking chaos. Surely EBC cannot consider this application without such vital detail?

8. The applicant seeks to change the use of the principal site here from retail to housing space. Cobham, and especially this area of Cobham, desperately needs to retain its retail space so such a change of use would be unthinkable.

Yours Sincerely,

Adrian Wise
Planning Team