

Our reference: COM600278259

Application number: 2024/0189

Application address: Heath Buildings High Street Oxshott Leatherhead Surrey KT22 0JP

Name: Mr Ellis

Address: 4 Midgarth Close, Oxshott, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT22 0JY

Comment type: You object to the planning application

Date of comment: 27 Mar 2024

Comment: At the 2022 pre-application stage officers gave strong guidance regarding the inappropriate design (scale/bulk and privacy infringements) – the exact words were that “ the massing/appearance needed to be dramatically altered “ but the 2023 application did not address these concerns and regrettably this submission fails to resolve these planning breaches.

Within the defined semi-rural Oxshott planning zone there are explicit rules regarding permitted height (2.5 story) which clearly this building fails to meet. Its overall scale, bulk and mass is outwith that required for a village high street scene. This objection was deemed a clear reason for refusal at the 2023 application stage and given the very minimal adjustments made must remain a key basis for rejection.

The close proximity of Midgarth to Heath Buildings is recognised via 2 covenants in the land registry title deeds. When the current building is viewed from the significantly lower Midgarth level it already presents an imposing building structure whose impact is mitigated by the extensive tree cover. If the proposed building was approved it would effectively be a 5 storey building when viewed from Midgarth with no cover or privacy protection being provided from the additional levels being added to the current height.

The long term preservation of the current trees on the North and West boundaries is absolutely vital in softening the bulk visual impact of the current/future building. There is a clear risk that the submitted tree radar survey work has been undertaken at a level too high to detect the roots that extend under the current foundations. I therefore object to the building of an underground car park as it will require significant excavations below the current foundation levels.

The 2023 application showed how strongly residents felt about there being any extension of the building footprint onto the pavement area – it is clear that residents see this area as a valued public amenity space that needs to be preserved and going forward enhanced.

The current application still extends into currently council owned pavement albeit with a modified retail frontage involving columns supporting the overbearing higher floors. As such it will still have a very significant adverse impact on this public space and as such I object to the proposed expanded footprint.

The developer/council has currently provided insufficient/conflicting details as to how the area in front of Heath Buildings will look if the proposal is approved (Trees, Clock , Community Notice Boards ,etc). This area has been shown to be of real importance to Oxshott residents and as such the lack of detail/consultation is not acceptable.

Prior to the situation where tenants were faced with short term leases the 5 current retail units in Heath Buildings had enjoyed good long term tenants. I therefore would contend that a reduction in future retail space (4 units with a 36% reduction in m2) can only be a negative impact to the future local economy. At the 2023 planning meeting significant weight was placed on the positive economic benefit the development would bring , this is very much at odds with the developers submission which provides no economic impact assessment and only referred to the increased number of flats and not the reduction in retail units. I would therefore object to the economic argument being cited to overturn clear planning regulation breaches without such arguments being thoroughly substantiated.

In the latest submission the developer has chosen to highlight the permitted development option of building upto 2 stories replicating the existing building design. Such a scheme would clearly be at odds with any vision of enhancing the Oxshott Village street scene. I would object to this being given any weight in the case officer or councillors assessment as the developer needs prior approval for such a scheme which has not been sought whilst any such a fall back scheme would still need to properly assessed against relevant planning requirements.

I am keen to see our village remain relevant and economically active for the future. The Heath Buildings development can be the key part of that vision providing the development more accurately balances the views of local residents and neighbours. At the moment the application is far too heavily skewed towards a property development scheme that seeks to ignore a number of valid concerns that have been raised since 2022.

I therefore would wish to see our council officers and councillors reject this latest submission such that we finally achieve a solution that is more sympathetic to the needs of our village.