

Great Langborough Residents' Association

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Ms Emy Circuit

27.01.15

Development Management Officer

Wokingham Borough Council

Shute End, Wokingham

Response to Planning Application/2014/2637/ Land at Market Place/Peach St/ Rose St, Wokingham.

Dear Ms Circuit,

I am responding to the planning application on behalf of the committee for the Great Langborough Residents' Association.

It was appreciated that the council planners have taken on board many of the comments made by residents in response to the previous application.

However, the general appearance of the buildings is still more modern and bland compared to the town buildings. These were said to be the basis for the overall design in Peach Street. However, they still seem to reflect the 60s build they intend to replace.

This does not seem to reflect the intentions of the council: "**To enhance the architectural quality of the town centre and public realm**"

There is also no mention of enhancing the town by use of art works such as that outside the library.

It is a severe disappointment however that the plan area excludes the row of shops of the old Bowyer premises and beyond, linking to the Fireserv application. These are a blot on the entry to Peach Street and therefore of the town. Clearly the buildings on the opposite side are a major issue and we would ask the Council to promote the improvement of both these areas if at all possible.

1. Re Market Place and Peach Street

We applaud the decision that the HAKA and Redan are not to be included in the demolition. We ask that consideration be given to extending this to include Nos. 18-22, which have similar frontages. They are more appropriate than the imposing high gabled building planned to replace them.

That replacement building is, as stated, quite overwhelming and the current design features are not sufficiently striking or in keeping with the town. If retained in the plans, it would benefit from

windows front and back in line with those on the building on the other side of the arcade and there should be some design feature to the open side that links into the smaller building beside it.

The design issue is true of most of the facades. They would be improved if, for instance, they mirrored the design features of different coloured bricks (cream/grey) as used on our marvellous town hall and other buildings around the town.

It is also disappointing that the windows are all grey powdered coated aluminium. Neither are they in the more traditional sash or multi-paned style. Most windows in the town are white.

Currently shoppers have some protection from the weather along Peach St. This will be lost in the current plan. Is it possible to replicate this in some way - perhaps with glass awnings as are being introduced in Bracknell town centre?

2. Re Rose Street car park / Peach 'Place'

The development of the pedestrian area creates a positive central rendezvous point but the design is also lacking imagination. It will have flat topped roofs and bland facades. Some of the buildings are also tall enough to obscure the view of the town hall from the area.

With regard to people with disability: it was difficult to see from the plans if there are lifts within accommodation areas to allow occupation by those with limited physical capacity.

Car Parking is a key weakness of the plan and needs to be addressed boldly.

The transport document considers the use of the other car parks in Easthampstead road, which are clearly underused. There has to be a reason for this. The council must consider why and how to make them more attractive to residents. There are some safety issues for crossing roads and for the residents of the town centre itself these are not really an attractive option.

Our understanding is that the problems of residents parking in and around Rose Street are discouraging buyers of the new apartments in that street. This will increase the issues for the new development. Would it be feasible to allow some permit holder spaces within the Place for those residents and also for disabled drivers?

We would also highlight comments made by the Wokingham Society relating to the *Wokingham Off-Street Car Park Capacity Statement*, which has not yet been published to the public. The *Wokingham Town Centre Car Parks Strategy* having been withdrawn, there is no available parking strategy against which the plan can be judged.

Vehicular access:

There will clearly be issues of access for HGV deliveries and waste collection. We support comments made by the Wokingham Society relating to the dangers and the need to consider how to manage this safely.

We reiterate the point that residents will need to be able to, at least have access for deliveries but not having parking may deter purchase.

Sustainability

Water provision: We are aware that there are toilets and other facilities available which use collected rain water. This would be a positive way of managing the site if feasible and should be considered at an early stage of planning.

3. Re: Rose street frontage

While a significant improvement to the original designs, these houses still do not really reflect the character of the houses in Rose St. The insets and dormer windows are a stab at reflecting those around the town, but do not really do so.

The proposed unit SU10 is also overlarge and unattractive and in no way reflects the buildings around it in Rose St.

We support comments made by the Wokingham Society as below.

The proposed unit SU013 between the town houses and the entry to Peach Square is spectacularly ugly and would be a blot on Wokingham's treasured historic street. It is block-like and massive with no discernible distinctive architectural features (and, despite claims at Section 7.7.5, it does not reference Wingmore Lodge opposite, even if that were desirable). We really do urge the developers to rethink the design of this building to make it less forbidding and more characterful, eg by removing the parapet so that the roof itself can become a feature, and by adding some delicate details to the frontage and thus avoiding the squareness of the current design. The roof could match the suggested tiling of the town houses.

We hope the council can alter the plans to reflect these views and would emphasise that we support all the comments made by the Wokingham Society in their submission.

Yours sincerely

Pat Smith

Chair, Great Langborough Residents association