

Great Langborough Residents' Association

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RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON ELMS FIELD DEVELOPMENT

The Great Langborough Residents Association committee welcomes the Wokingham Borough Council's promotion of consultation prior to the revised planning application being submitted and that alterations have been made to the presented plans in line with some of the responses to the original planning application.

However we do note that a similar exercise prior to the submission of the Peach Place application did not result in any change in the plans presented to us then. We hope that the council will take current comments into account this time.

Regardless we make the following comments: -

We still hold the view that Elms Field should remain a green space and that it would be a significant legacy for the council to develop it as a Town Park with similar amenities to those suggested for the much reduced green space remaining in the plans presented to us, as was intended by the donors.

If however the council is determined to proceed with its plans to build on Elms Field, we support the general plans for a cinema and small shops interspersed with residential units.

Supermarket

We do not feel a supermarket in the centre of town is consistent with the need to provide a different experience to our rivals, Reading and Bracknell. We are concerned that, unless it is one of the major players, it may not draw in the footfall needed to make it a financial venture. We would question the evidence that shoppers will come into town to do their grocery shopping and want also to visit the town itself. Many shoppers prefer now to shop online and if not might prefer to go to a large shop with good parking facilities. We feel the Council needs to demonstrate how it has come to its conclusion given the recent changes in people's shopping habits.

The general view from residents demonstrates strong opposition to the loss of green amenity to an additional supermarket in the town centre and the retail study that is quoted by WBC showing future need gives no indication of position. It would make more sense if this need was met by smaller convenience stores on the new housing developments or a larger store out of town.

Funding issue

Our understanding is that the council will be funding the supermarket and would then take a financial loss if the shop does not succeed and the tenant pulls out early or negotiates a much lower lease. This is also true of the hotel planned.

We would welcome background information about the finances behind these decisions and transparency about the implications.

Residential buildings

On a more specific note, the style of the buildings, house, shops and hotels should mirror the Victorian feel of Wokingham and not be glass blocks and/or too modern in appearance. We also object to the proposal of four storey housing around the field and feel it should not be above three stories, if that. Those on Denmark Street also need to reflect the housing opposite. We feel that there should be some affordable housing in the plans.

Traffic issues

Regarding traffic and parking, we continue to have major concerns about the apparent lack of overall traffic and parking plans for the town. Given the plan to build houses along Denmark Street we hope that the road will be widened to accommodate two way traffic as this is very tight at the moment. The impact on Langborough Road is an important issue in this regard.

This is of course, also true for the whole area and the amount of traffic that will accrue from the SDR.

Finally, We have not chosen to respond to the questionnaire from the council but feel that individuals should respond to this independently.

We hope this response will be helpful and useful to the Council planners

Pat Smith, GLRA chair

On behalf of the Great Langborough Residents Association