



Merrow Residents' Association
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Mr J Busher
Planning Policy
Guildford Borough Council
Millmead House
Guildford
GU2 4BB

23rd December 2021

Dear Mr Busher

21/P/02232 | Demolition of existing building and erection of two buildings comprising residential accommodation (Use Class C3), retail floorspace (Use Class E) and cinema (Sui Generis), erection of a retail pavilion (Use Class E), together with car and cycle parking, plant and all highways, landscaping and other associated works. | Debenhams, Millbrook, Guildford, GU1 3UU

We wish to object to the above application for the following reasons:-

1. Inadequate set back from the River Wey. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to open up the river and permit the public to have unfettered access to the river which is one of the jewels in the Guildford crown. What we need is the creation of a riverside walk where the public can really enjoy this beautiful amenity. This has not been achieved. Indeed the south east corner of the site is even closer to the river than the existing building.

The proposed triangular building near the bridge would further obscure views of the river. This building has little or no value to the development and we hope that it can be removed from the plans.

2. Excessive height. Put simply the buildings are too high and would ruin this part of town and interfere with views across the town. The buildings need to be several storeys lower. The Solum development should not set a precedent since this is a separate site and the plans were approved on appeal in a different planning era and before the Guildford Local Plan was adopted in 2019. The plans give an unfortunate impression of massing and the plans should be amended to mitigate the impact. It is accepted that the development must be dense since the site is in the town centre but that doesn't mean that the massing should hit you in the face as these buildings appear to do.

3. Impact on views. We have studied the various montage views provided for this application and have found them unconvincing and far too selective. We are clear that the development will spoil the view not only within Guildford but also across Guildford. It would be irretrievably damaging to the character of this town if views were to be ruined in this way. As one example the development would obscure the magnificent views of the Surrey Hills AONB from the High Street. There are plenty of other examples.
4. Local impact. The development would have a serious deleterious impact on buildings close to the site which are in a Conservation Area and therefore contain some unique historic buildings. As mentioned earlier we have a once in a lifetime opportunity to not only protect but improve the unique structure and settings in our town and this application does nothing to achieve that. What is proposed is overbearing and out of keeping with the character of the town centre. It will do little to improve the ambience of the area and to make it a more pleasant place for the public to live, work, shop or even meander.
5. Consultation. We are concerned at the lack of **real** consultation prior to the submission of this application. It appears that the developers are simply going through the motions since so few of the objections raised during the consultation process have resulted in changes to the plans that have been submitted. The comments in the 'statement of community involvement' bears this out as they are so dismissive.
6. Viability study. We have read the viability study forming part of this application since it is suggested that the two buildings must be 7/8 storeys high in order to make the development financially viable. We are not in a position to comment or criticise the detail in the study but we are aware that others have done so and their comments and concerns are on the GBC website. We therefore suggest that the study should be scrutinised in great detail to ensure that the figures are up to date and are also credible. We understand that it is normal practice for GBC to arrange for such a study to be scrutinised by an external consultant and we will be interested to know what view they take on this viability study.
7. Environmental studies. We are seeking views on the environmental reports in the application and therefore we reserve the right to comment on this at later stage.
8. Conclusion. We trust that officers will recommend refusal of this application for the reasons we have outlined above.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Strawson
Chairman