



Merrow Residents' Association

www.merrowresidents.org

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Mr John Busher
Planning Department
Guildford Borough Council
Millmead
Guildford
GU2 4BB

29th September 2022

Dear Mr Busher

Planning Application 22/P/01336 | A mixed use redevelopment on a site bounded by North Street, Leapale Road and including Commercial Road and part of Woodbridge Road, Guildford.

The Merrow Residents' Association objects to the above application which needs to be withdrawn and re-considered as it is out of keeping with the existing elements of the town and will do nothing to enhance an area that is overdue for development.

We appreciate that Guildford Borough Council (GBC) have tried strenuously with the developers to bring forward an acceptable development but they have failed even though there has been a very significant level of public consultation and dialogue which is ongoing on social media and real efforts have been made to retain a bus station which we applaud. We also appreciate the number of new homes that the development would deliver- which exceeds the 400 new homes suggested in the Guildford Local Plan. On the other hand we are very disappointed that the developers are not including any affordable homes at all. On that basis alone the application should be withdrawn for further consideration.

Our starting point is policy A5 of the Guildford Local Plan- Strategy and Sites. This recently adopted policy was discussed at length during the Examination in Public of the Plan but seems to have been ignored by the developers. The requirements section of this policy states that the development must respond to the context set by the surrounding street pattern and historic environmentthrough the need for high quality design with particular care of massing heights and roofscapes. What we have is a mass of high buildings with narrow uninteresting streets and with no eye catching quality designs to enhance the centre of town and to be in symbiosis with the eclectic structures in the High Street. We find the buildings in the development to be uninspiring and unattractive and that they don't meet the criteria in policy A5 that they should be of high quality. The constructional quality may be acceptable but the design quality leaves a lot to be desired.

Above all the heights of the buildings are far too high. We are struck by the comparison of the fly through on the developer's website and the model of the development at the

exhibition. The former is glossy and full of imaginative artist's impressions whilst the latter shows you just how packed the site is and that there is only limited space between some buildings. We have reviewed the townscape and visual impact assessments in the application and are struck by the impact of the 14 storey building from a number of vantage points. An examination of the development across town from Daptune Wharf, Pewley Hill, Stag Hill, Woodbridge Road, Farnham Road, and the Barrs has drawn us to the conclusion that the development will dominate the landscape in a totally unacceptable manner that doesn't accord with the requirement on massing heights and roofscapes in policy A5 of the Local Plan. This 14 storey building is not only too high but has no redeeming features at all- this is clear from the view of the building from Woodbridge Road. We share the concerns that have been expressed about the height of the buildings that have been succinctly described by John Harrison in his letter to the Guildford Dragon of the 29th August and by others both in the Dragon and also in social media. The impact of the development from the Hog's Back, below, is an excellent example of the unacceptable impact of the development on the views across Guildford.



It is our hope that North Street will be developed as it is long overdue but these plans need to be withdrawn and amended to reduce the height of the buildings and to make the buildings less overbearing.

This is an historic and unique opportunity for Guildford. It requires an imaginative, creative and sympathetic design to set a tone and direction for this and future developments within the centre of our (potentially) beautiful town. This is too precious an opportunity to waste.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Strawson
Chairman