

From: publicaccess@cherwell-dc.gov.uk <publicaccess@cherwell-dc.gov.uk>
Sent: 08 July 2019 20:12
To: Public Access DC Comments <PublicAccessDC.Comments@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk>
Subject: Comments for Planning Application 19/01036/F

Planning Application comments have been made. A summary of the comments is provided below.

Comments were submitted at 8:11 PM on 08 Jul 2019 from Dr Callum Docherty.

Application Summary

Address: Bicester Eco Town Exemplar Site Phase 2 Charlotte Avenue Bicester

Proposal: Development of a new Local Centre comprising Retail, Commercial and Community floorspace (flexible Use Class A1/A2/A3/B1/D1), and 38 residential units (use class C3) with associated access, servicing, landscaping and parking

Case Officer: Caroline Ford
[Click for further information](#)

Customer Details

Name: Dr Callum Docherty
Address: 37 Charlotte Avenue, Bicester OX27 8AS

Comments Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour
Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application
Reasons for comment:
Comments: Noise

The applicant proposes building a large number of flats, each with a balcony, overlooking the river corridor. These balconies will face existing homes, including my own, on the opposite side of the river corridor; as well as overlooking a children's play area.

This is already a very noisy area. The acoustics of the river corridor are such that even normal sound levels echo and are magnified, so that sound is clearly heard within the adjacent homes. The addition of 14 new balconies overlooking the area can only exacerbate this problem. Even just normal use of the balconies will, due to the acoustics of the area, lead to unacceptable levels of noise for the adjacent properties, especially at night.

The existing houses at Elmsbrook have been designed to maximise solar heat gain, whilst being only passively cooled. As a result, A2's own guidance states residents should keep windows open during the night to cool the houses. If the windows are not opened in the night, heat builds up in the houses and becomes unbearable. Thus we do not have the option of closing the windows to block out the sound from the new balconies.

We have sought reassurance from A2 that the balconies would not cause noise problems for the existing houses. Their response was merely that we could use our right to object to the planning permission. The lack of reassurance on this problem from A2 is telling; and counters A2's boasts to have worked with residents in forming these plans.

Unsuitability of the design

Elmsbrook as a whole, and Charlotte Avenue in particular, have been designed to be a traditional, primarily residential area. Even the existing blocks of flats are relatively short, and have relatively few flats in each. The current plans propose to insert 38 flats into a small part of this street - potentially around 150 new residents. Such a high density of people injected into the middle of a residential street would completely change the character of the area.

The buildings themselves are also completely out of character with the surrounding area. The proposed height and density of the buildings would be overbearing compared to the modest size of the existing buildings, and are completely out of place on a residential street.

I note that the applicant claims the proposed three storey buildings have been designed "responding the levels established by the Eco Business Centre and the adjacent three story apartment blocks on Charlotte Avenue" (paragraph 6.28 of the planning statement). This is misleading. The existing three storey blocks are far shorter than the proposed buildings, and cover a far smaller area. A2 also claimed to residents that the proposed buildings were no taller than those of the original local centre plan. This is again misleading: in the original plans only a small proportion of the building reached the proposed height; in the current plans the entire building reaches the maximum height, resulting in a much more overbearing design.

Traffic and pollution

The insertion of such a large number of new flats into the middle of a street will significantly increase the traffic to the area. It must be noted that the houses along Charlotte Avenue are very close to the road; there is no

front garden space to separate the houses from the road. As a result, pollution emitted by cars can very easily enter homes, especially as the windows of homes are kept open to allow passive heating. Given the severe health impact that vehicle pollution is now known to have, allowing construction of a building that would inevitably lead to a large increase in traffic in the area would be a dereliction of the Council's duty to protect its residents.

In addition to the increased pollution, the present plans will inevitably create parking issues on the estate. Each flat is planned to have a single car parking space. Whilst this matches the minimum previously allowed by the Council, actual experience must now take precedence over this theoretical aim. The existing flats at Elmsbrook have only one parking space, but many of flats have more than one car. The result has been a dangerous clogging of roads where residents have sought to park their additional vehicles. It seems beyond doubt that the addition of 38 flats, with only one parking space, will dramatically exacerbate this problem. Again, the unsuitable density of the new development is a particular issue, meaning that the existing properties adjacent to the proposed site will have to bear the brunt of the parking issues caused by the current plans.

The applicant presents a false choice between no local centre and the current plans

The applicant was previously granted planning permission for a local centre which focused on providing local amenities. This plan was used to sell homes at Elmsbrook at a premium price. The applicant now claims that Elmsbrook is not large enough for such amenities, and that as a result the only choices available are no local centre at all or the current plans. This is a false choice intended to force the Council's hand. It can be expected that further development will take place in the Eco-town that will make local amenities viable. It would therefore be prudent to maximise flexibility of any development so that the promised amenities (such as grocery shop and eco-pub) can be delivered later; or to delay construction until future sites are imminent. In any case, the applicant's arguments do not justify the addition of 38 flats. Such a large number of flats has only been included for the benefit of the applicant, and to the detriment of existing residents.

Conclusion

It is clear that such a large number of new flats inserted into a small space on a residential street will have a detrimental impact on local residents. Simply changing the plans to a single storey of flats per building, rather than the present two-storeys, would mitigate these

problems to a significant degree.