



MELTON PARISH COUNCIL

27 July 2017

The Planning Officer
Suffolk Coastal District Council
East Suffolk House
Station Road
Melton
Woodbridge
Suffolk
IP12 1RT

Planning application ref: DC/17/2840/FUL

Dear Sir / Madam,

Former Council Offices, Melton Hill, Woodbridge

Proposed demolition of all the existing offices and surrounding buildings on the site and replacement with a high quality housing development providing 100 residential units (33 affordable) (C3) together with a community building (D1) and a retail unit that may be a coffee shop (A1/2/3) or retail unit. A landscape environment free from cars as they are located in an underground car park. Means of access and other associated works.

Melton Parish Council Planning and Transport Committee, at its meeting on 26 July 2017, considered the above application and it was resolved to recommend refusal. The reasons are set out below.

1. The density proposed is far in excess of the high density threshold set out in the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan and too high for this sensitive site. The proposals which now form the application are markedly different from the original proposals; they were for around 70 units, the final submission is for 100. In terms of density, given the site of 1.32 hectares of which only 1.25 hectares is available to build on given flood zone designations, that equates to 80 dwellings per hectare. The Suffolk Coastal Local Plan states that high density would generally be regarded as 50 units per hectare i.e. 62.5 units for the 1.25 hectare site rather than the proposed 100.
2. The housing mix proposed for the development is 89% 1 and 2 bedroom units. The Local Plan requires, in developments over 5 units, a mix in respect of combined open market / affordable housing of 13%, 32%, 34% and 20% for 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedrooms respectively. The mix proposed undoubtedly reflects the fact that the development as proposed is mostly apartments. However given the very high level of need for affordable family homes it is not surprising that the East Suffolk Housing service has expressed concern about the mix. All the affordable housing offered is in the form of apartments, and East Suffolk Housing has requested, on the basis of 33 affordable units, a better balance of houses and apartments i.e. 19 apartments and 14

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houses. On the basis that such a revised mix would much better reflect the ability to meet housing need it should be considered in relation to whatever final numbers of dwellings might be agreed.

3. Parking arrangements for residents are in the form of 93 spaces in the “undercroft” and 6 for visitors. Applying the Suffolk County Council parking standards guidance, 1, 1.5 and 2 parking spaces should be provided for 1, 2 and 3 bedroom units respectively, with a visitor allowance of 0.25 per unit. Based on that guidance the proposed development should more realistically have 145.5 allocated spaces, plus 25 for visitors. Whilst Suffolk Coastal District Council can legitimately allow fewer spaces than per the County Council’s guidance where there is proximity to a town centre, rail station etc., accepting provision on a 1:1 basis is likely to cause overspill parking arrangements for the wider community. Also provision is underground. Experience has shown in urban environments where this has been tried, that residents will rather park illegally or inconsiderately rather than use such provision because of both inconvenience and fear of crime. This element of the proposal should be revised.
4. The design of the proposed development now applied for has undergone a radical change since the initial proposals last year. Although the applicant asserts community support for the plans as now submitted, but does not produce detailed evidence for this, there are over 230 letters of objection already lodged. Woodbridge Town Council has recommended that the application be rejected. The revised proposals include the demolition of the two Victorian / Edwardian buildings fronting Melton Hill. The Heritage Impact Assessment dismisses them as either being unexceptional or not a local landmark. Melton councillors disagree with that assessment, as many others already have. The buildings may be said to form a potential bridge between the traditional architecture along Melton Hill, and any new development, whereas what is proposed may look out of place intruding into the traditional street scene of Melton Hill. The bulk, scale and harsh urban form of the proposed new blocks has been masked by the soft-focus nature of the watercolour drawings designed to obscure their true impact. It has been estimated that the tallest of the new buildings, at 33 metres above ordnance datum, will be about the same height as the old pine tree, now cut down. The height and bulk of these new blocks may not only impact on the immediate surroundings e.g. Deben Road, but also in the longer distance views across the River Deben and from the river path.
5. Melton councillors are concerned at the loss of trees on the site, in particular, the two black mulberries and the trees fronting Melton Hill. The RSPB and Suffolk Wildlife Trust, in their responses, have highlighted what they consider to be inadequacy in the submitted Habitats Regulations Assessment. The Suffolk Wildlife Trust does not consider that the information as submitted with the application demonstrates that the proposed development will not result in a significant adverse impact on the Deben Estuary SPA and Ramsar site, and on protected UK and priority species (reptiles). Councillors are also concerned at any worsening of the air quality on Melton Hill caused by the additional traffic attempting to exit the development at peak times.
6. In terms of both Suffolk Coastal planning policy and the National Planning Policy Framework, the application would appear to be deficient. Local Plan Policy SP26 requires opportunities to be balanced with constraints in Woodbridge to consolidate a town that “retains the quality of the built environment and the character of the riverside and the estuary”. Local Plan Policy DM21 requires developments to “relate to the scale and character of their surroundings, particularly in terms of their siting, height, massing and form”, and Local Plan Policy DM23 requires proposals to have regard to matters of privacy / overlooking and “the resulting physical relationship with other properties”. The National Planning Policy Framework requires (at paragraph 66) that applicants work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. “Proposals that can

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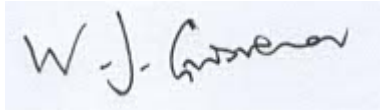
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demonstrate this in developing the design of the new development should be looked on more favourably." Melton councillors feel that none of these requirements have been met.

For all the above reasons Melton Parish Council strongly recommends that this application is refused.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light blue background. The signature reads "W. J. Grosvenor" in a cursive style.

William Grosvenor

Clerk to Melton Parish Council

Email: clerk@melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk