

## **Martlesham Parish Council**

### **PLANNING APPLICATION DC/20/1036/FUL - LAND EAST AND WEST OF THE SQUARE, MARTLESHAM HEATH - CONSTRUCTION OF RETIREMENT APARTMENTS FOR THE ELDERLY, A NEW PUBLIC CAR PARK, ACCESS, LANDSCAPING AND ANCILLARY DEVELOPMENT**

**Martlesham Parish Council objects to the application unless the following issues are satisfactorily addressed:**

#### **1. Dominance of the structure and resultant density**

As proposed the structure is excessively dominating and inappropriate in scale and design given its location on a tightly constrained site between existing houses on the north and south sides.

The application mentions that there are precedents set by three storey buildings in the area and argues that therefore the proposed design is in keeping with its environment. However, the existing three storey buildings are distributed around the village centre and none is a single dominant large structure as proposed. The largest current structure is the building on the west side of the village centre and this is only 2 1/2 storeys with a mansard roof. The tall maltings style building referred to in the Design & Access statement is a "signposting" feature and is not a relevant precedent.

The proposed design will mean existing residents on the north side of the site will face a dominating building resulting in overlook and loss of privacy. The two gable end sections which extend forwards will be particularly intrusive, the impact of which is made worse by the use of rendering finished in a highlighting colour which will increase their visibility though any existing or proposed trees (which are almost all deciduous).

On the south side, the development will dominate some of the houses which form the northern edge of Lark Rise. In particular the close proximity of the gable ends of the two storey extension (approx.. 40ft from existing houses) will be very oppressive and is unacceptable. Landscaping proposals along that side are inadequate, especially the lack of landscaping underneath the 2 storey gable ends to soften their appearance. The separation between Lark Rise and the southernmost part of the development should be increased. Use of hipped gable ends would significantly reduce the dominance of that structure as seen from the homes in Lark Rise.

Examination of many McCarthy & Stone sites shows that what is being proposed is a variation of a typical standard design. However, examples exist of designs which have been more effective in their sensitivity to the surrounding area. An example is Louis Arthur Court in North Walsham.

A reduced number of apartments may be viable; it is noted that 5 of the 8 sites in table 5 of the Transport Assessment have 36 or fewer apartments.

In light of the above, we therefore consider that the development does not sufficiently meet the criteria of Martlesham Neighbourhood Plan (MNP) Policy MAR3: Development within Martlesham Heath:

*C. "Development must demonstrate a high quality of built design and layout. It must allow for the retention of tree belts that surround sites as well as generally providing well landscaped edges to development sites in order to provide a buffer between developments."*

#### **2. Loss of public parking provision and insufficient spaces for residents**

The Parish Council has examined the Applicant's Transport Assessment and the response from SCC Highways and is in agreement with SCC's findings, having also concluded from its own survey that there is an unacceptable shortage of parking in the proposal.

N.B. there are two differing designs for the car park layout contained within the various documents in the application pack. Both suffer the deficiencies identified below.

The capacity of the proposed car park on the old runway is overstated for two reasons a) there appears to be no provision for pedestrian access in and out of the car park other than via the road into it and b) there is no disabled parking. The effect of providing these is likely to reduce the number of spaces to about 50.

The proposal shows a lack of appreciation as to how the runway area is currently used. The runway forms a criss-cross of routes for adults and children (including wheelchair and walking aid users) coming up the east and west side of the Village Green to access the Square, the surgery and the public path to the footbridge. Failure to recognise and plan for that will result in people taking risky shortcuts and damaging any landscaping put in place.

The purpose of the 8 bollard-controlled spaces is unclear. If they are additional capacity for residents then visitors and staff will have to use the already depleted public spaces. If they are for visitors and are normally kept locked, then visitors will tend to park in the public spaces if available rather than park on the access road whilst trying to get hold of a key for the bollards.

Whilst it would not address the shortfall as such, making these spaces public and hence part of the total pool of public spaces would statistically result in their more efficient usage. This presupposes that the 16 on site would be sufficient (which seems unlikely). Even allowing for the relative mix of 1 and 2 beds the parking space per bedroom ratio seems low compared to other McCarthy & Stone developments.

The NHS preferred option for providing GP services is by expanding existing neighbouring practices for new developments under 3500 dwellings. The agent for the owners of Village Square has confirmed that there are options within their boundary to expand the Practice premises to meet growing demand. Failure to have sufficient parking could jeopardise the long-term viability of the surgery - which is a key service which would attract buyers to the proposed development in the first place. The requirements of policy MAR3 must be met:

*F. "Any development proposals must demonstrate that they have engaged with the Clinical Commissioning Group in respect of the existing primary healthcare facility. Proposals shall not prejudice the potential for expansion of the existing healthcare facility unless it is clearly demonstrated that this is not necessary to support the growth proposed in the Neighbourhood Plan area and at the strategic site at Adastral Park during the plan period."*

Any proposed design for the car park must clearly demonstrate access arrangements for vehicles onto the Village Green, e.g. for Fetes, maintenance etc. Such access should be securable so as to prevent illegal access of any sort.

The proposals are therefore contrary to MNP policies:

MNP Policy MAR3: Development within Martlesham Heath

*B. .... "development must take into account the requirement for an appropriate level of parking (Policy MAR15)";*

*E. "Development specifically within the village centre, as identified on the Policies Map, must also address the following criteria:*

- 2. It should contain car parking for village centre users and should not result in the loss of existing public off-street car parking in the immediate local area; and*
- 3. It should not result in additional car parking along Eagle Way, particularly close to the village centre."*

Point 7.29, p49 of the MNP, says "It is also considered that there should be no reduction of existing parking provision, either off-street or on-street, unless it can be appropriately re-provided." Policy MAR15: Parking Provision states "Proposals that would reduce the existing level of off-street parking provision will be resisted unless it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that the amount of overall provision is adequate".

### **3. Visual Impact on the Village Green**

As a "Modern Village" one of Martlesham Heath's special features is the almost total lack of vehicles being visible from the Green. Hence the policy in MAR3:

*Development specifically within the village centre.....must retain and enhance the visual quality of the village green setting, its accessibility by all users and the common activities carried out on the green.*

Assuming that the car park design is as shown on Page 14 of the Design & Access statement it fails to show any meaningful details as to how the above would be achieved in terms of bunding and planting schemes. The Landscaping Proposals are also very sketchy with respect to the runway car park as compared to the details shown for the main part of the site.

The final paragraph on Page 14 of the Design & Access statement mentions a report by TCL group which seems to refer to the car park. This report does not appear to be available on the ESC website. Is this available?

The Parish Council contacted McCarthy & Stone about a month ago and emphasised the above policy, and were told they would look into the possibility of producing a Visually Verified Montage looking north from the Village Green. However, since then the lock down has come into force and it may not have been possible to carry out that work - we have not seen this montage.

The Parish Council regards meeting the above policy as being essential to maintain the character of the Green and its pattern of usage, and make its change of use acceptable to the local community.

A height barrier should be provided to prevent the car park being used by commercial vehicles.

#### **4. Area Protected from Development (APD)**

The Parish Council welcomes the retention of the triangular APD between the proposed building's eastern edge and the footpath leading to the footbridge. This APD was established in 2001 when Bradford Property Trust appealed against Suffolk Coastal District Council's (SCDC) classification of that land as an APD in the 2001 local plan. The appeal Inspector found in favour of the District Council remarking that *"The land in question forms part of the attractive landscaped approach to the District Centre and merits its status as an APD"*.

Its status has since been carried forward through updates of the Local Plan and then into the Neighbourhood Plan.

This is still the case and it would form important mitigation of the impact of the proposed development, and an important amenity to the occupants of the development.

Any proposals to develop in that area (other than the outdoor seating area with landscaping as show in the application) would be contrary to the Neighbourhood Plan, and hence strongly opposed by the Parish Council, and to the local community judging by the volume of objections to a proposed development on the APD in 2017.

When District Cllr Blundell arranged a tour of Martlesham Heath for members of the SCDC Planning Committee a few years ago several members remarked on the attractiveness of the approach to the Village Centre.

#### **5. Impact during construction**

If approval is given, measures should be stipulated to minimise the impact on adjacent properties with reasonable limits on operational hours. No work should be carried out on Saturday and Sunday.

It is essential that before the current car park is closed alternative parking is provided for both visitors to the surgery and to maintain the footfall to the Square so that the retail businesses and office users are not affected during the build.

To conclude, in principle the Parish Council welcomes the proposal to provide retirement accommodation as it would help meet the need set out in MNP Policy MAR5 Section A for older

people looking to downsize. However, as it stands, this planning application fails to meet the necessary criteria for development set out in the Neighbourhood Plan and it should therefore be refused.