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Comments on Planning Application 24/00072/FUL

An application for the erection of a three storey building to create 6 x 2 bed and 3 x 1 bed flats (Use Class C3). Formation of access road. Provision of bin and cycle storage. Alterations to landscaping. Land To The Rear Of 9 Elsfield Way Oxford Oxfordshire OX2 8EW

The Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum (WNF) seeks to represent the views (in relation to planning matters) of residents in the Wolvercote Neighbourhood Plan area, which includes Elsfield Way. The Wolvercote Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) was approved overwhelmingly by our residents in a referendum in May 2021 and was subsequently 'made' by Oxford City Council.

The WNF Steering Committee has considered this application and finds that in a number of respects the application is unacceptable. **WNF therefore objects to permission being granted.**

Reasons for objecting

The proposed flats will have an unacceptable effect on the privacy, daylight and sunlight for the occupants of both the new buildings and the existing nearby houses on Elsfield Way, Riddell Place, Harefields, and the flats at 40, Harefields.

There are no windows on the west elevation, and only very small windows on the southerly and northerly elevations. This will mean very little sunlight in the new flats. That is contrary to WNP Policy BEC2, which states "Development design should maximise natural light within dwellings...". Although it is an attempt to protect the privacy of neighbours, it will mean a huge ugly 3 storey blank wall as their view, especially from the gardens of the immediate neighbours at 7 Elsfield Way, and to a lesser extent at 5 Elsfield Way, Riddell Place and numerous homes on the south side of Harefields. This is contrary to Policy H14 of the Local Plan which states "planning permission will not be granted for any development that has an overbearing effect on existing homes".

Windows and balconies are provided on the eastern elevation of the block. These face directly onto some of the flats at 40, Harefields, which will therefore suffer badly from overlooking. This is another direct contradiction of WNP Policy BEC2, which

states “Development design should safeguard privacy by minimising overlooking...”. We are shocked to see from the Design and Access Statement that the occupants of these flats were excluded from the list of neighbours notified directly of the proposed scheme.

Appendix 6 of the Local Plan includes advice on the creation of high quality developments by the use of a checklist. There are a series of questions to be used by developers:

One question is “How do the new buildings respect the surrounding character?”

Another question is “How does the scale of the new development relate to its surroundings?”

The buildings outlined in this application do not respect the local character, as they are too high, and they are out of scale for the size of the plot.

On biodiversity, The Environment Act 2021 requires developers to include as a part of their plans details of how biodiversity will be increased by 10% as a part of the development. A green roof, two cherry trees and some bee hotels would be most unlikely to meet this requirement, as the site is an overgrown wild garden at present. The proposals on biodiversity in this application are inadequate.

For all these reasons, we object to planning permission being granted for this scheme.

From Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum Steering Committee:

Paul Buckley, John Bleach, Mary Brown, Tony Dale, Suzy Donald, Katherine Kaye, Richard Lawrence-Wilson, Andrew Siantonas, David Stone.

11 March 2024