



Planning Enquiries
Planning Department
Guildford Borough Council
Millmead House
Millmead, Guildford GU2 4BB

FAO Ms K Jethwa

31st August 2020

Dear Ms Jethwa

**Planning Reference 19/P/01726 Land at, Church Street, Effingham, KT24
Proposed erection of 17 dwellings including access, parking and landscaping (amended plans received 05/08/2020 with loss of 3 dwellings, changes to the housing mix, site layout, retained boundary landscaping and addition of open space).**

The Effingham Residents Association (EFFRA) strongly objects to this planning application.

Whilst this amended application reduces the proposed number of houses to 17 from the 20 in the previous application and contains some minor design improvements the main issues and constraints of the application remain unchanged and the application offers no compelling reasons as to why they should be disregarded. EFFRA asks for this reason that its previous letters of 4th November 2019 and 19th November 2018 should also be taken into account.

EFFRA believes the main issues and constraints of this application which warrant its refusal are:

- The allocation of this site for in the Effingham Neighbourhood Plan (ENP) that was adopted by Guildford Borough Council in April 2018. The “up to 9” homes allocation on this site is therefore the official policy for homes on this site while the Effingham Neighbourhood Plan is the agreed policy.
- The sensitive nature of this site makes the proposed design and number of houses against key policies in the ENP, the Guildford Local Plan and the National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF).
- The damaging impact it would have on listed buildings nearby and the Conservation Area.

- The detrimental effect on highways and traffic in a particularly congested road with known safety issues.

Allocation of Site in Effingham Neighbourhood Plan (ENP)

The applicant argues in his planning statement that the Local Plan 2019 has rendered the allocation of “up to 9” homes on this site in the ENP as out of date. This is obviously a fallacious argument. The ENP was prepared in the context of and to work with the emerging Local Plan. Effingham Parish Council as the authors of the ENP were offered the choice by the official Examiner of having “up to 9” homes on this site or waiting for the inset to take effect when it was possible more might be allowed, with the Examiner’s explicit caveat that a number of around 20 “would be liable to impact on the character and appearance of the area contrary to GLP policy RE3 and the NPPF.” The Parish Council chose unanimously to go with the “up to 9” in its policy ENP SA1 and this was what was voted for overwhelmingly by the village (93.5% of the village with a high 44% turnout). Guildford Borough Council then adopted the ENP in the full knowledge of its emerging Local Plan and the ENP now effectively forms part of that Plan. Although a counter argument could be made that as the village now has more houses than needed as a result of the Secretary of State’s decision on Effingham Lodge Farm that the “up to 9 “ are not needed, a Neighbourhood Plan is an agreed policy document and cannot be disregarded because of minor changing circumstances. The application therefore should be refused as it is contrary to Policy ENP-SA1 in the adopted Effingham Neighbourhood Plan and the Guildford Local Plan.

The Sensitive Nature of the Site – density and design

This site is at the centre of the village and its Conservation Area. Its importance to both cannot be overstated. Whilst it is largely hidden behind a historically old hedge and trees for much of the year (as they are largely deciduous) glimpses of the quiet and green space beyond are important to the character of the village and Conservation Area which is a quiet and historic area. Any development on this site needs to be sensitive to these characteristics.

The applicant in his planning statement argues that the site was initially assessed for around 20 dwellings by GBC and the ENP Group. This statement conveniently forgets that this identified number arose from an error in the SHLAA in June 2014 prepared by consultants for GBC. In this document the size of the site was incorrectly listed as 1.13 hectares when it is in fact 0.7 hectares, almost half of the wrongly listed size. The consultants allocated 22 dwellings on the site obviously considering in a desk bound exercise that a density per hectare of 19 for this sensitive site was appropriate. The ENP Examiner was able to visit the site and assess its characteristics and recommended a density per hectare of 12.86 or “up to 9 dwellings.” The current proposed number of 17 dwellings would be a dph of 24, much higher than recommended by the consultants and the Examiner and inappropriate for this sensitive site in a Conservation Area.

The design of the development is also contrary to the ENP and Local Plan design policies. The design is a fairly normal layout of standard uninteresting houses that does not reflect the setting of the village and Conservation Area where layouts and houses are not standard and there is a diversity of

design producing a historic eclectic feel. The rooves are still too high and will be dominant and there will be privacy issues for overlooked residents. The number of vehicles likely to use the narrow access road is considered unacceptable in terms of noise and pollution for the properties either side of it against policy ENP-ENV5. The application ignores the Dark Skies policy ENP-ENV4 by proposing street lighting, as in this part of the village there is no street lighting to protect its night-time environment. It is against policy ENP-C4 and ENP-SA1 where part of this site is designated for an extension of the Community Burial Ground. Instead it proposes giving land to the church.

Damage to Heritage Assets - Nationally and Locally Listed Buildings and the Conservation Area

This site not only sits in the centre of the Conservation Area but is also close or adjacent to seven nationally listed buildings and a number of other locally listed buildings. In addition to harm to the Conservation Area, a number of these would suffer substantial harm to their setting from this proposed development. Grade II listed The Lodge (which contrary to the Design and Access Statement is adjacent to this site) was historically closely associated with it as the site formed part of its estate and was previously part of the manor complex of Effingham East Court manor house that formerly was situated in what is now Effingham Place. The Lodge overlooks this field and its setting will be harmed by the height and bulk of the buildings. The Grade II* listed St Lawrence Church and its graveyard which contains three listed vaults is only separated by this site by the Community Graveyard and is visible from it. Its setting will be harmed by noise, light and closeness of the buildings in what is currently a very quiet setting largely unaffected by artificial lighting. Opposite the site on Church Street are a number of listed cottages which currently look up over the site which is on higher ground and would be dominated by the height of the buildings above them. Church Street is an important street at the centre of the Conservation Area with a quiet and historic character which would be adversely affected by this development.

This harm would be contrary to national guidelines in the NPPF and in the ENP (policies ENP-G2, 3 & 4) and the Local Plan. The NPPF gives protection to heritage assets where developments are considered. It requires that developments do not damage heritage assets and paragraph 200 requires local authorities to look favourably at developments that “enhance or better reveal..(the) significance” of heritage assets. The Local Plan similarly aims to protect heritage assets from inappropriate development in policies HE4 and D3. The ENP specifically protects assets around this site from damage stating in Policy ENP-SA1 that any proposal for it should:

- Demonstrate that the character and appearance of the Effingham Conservation Area is preserved or enhanced by the development
- Demonstrate that the proposal does not adversely affect the settings of The Lodge and St Lawrence Church (Grade II and Grade II* Listed Buildings) by virtue of design or impact on significant views.

The detrimental effect on highways and traffic

EFFRA is also concerned about the effect on highway safety from this proposal. This development would be served by a narrow access road from Lower Road through which all vehicles both

residential, trade and refuse would have to pass. The proposed entrance is on a particularly dangerous and congested section of Lower Road with two schools and soon to have a further 260 dwellings. We submit that this access is unsuitable for this number of houses and that insufficient parking is provided in the dense design to keep all parked vehicles from the development off the roads around. It has been accepted that Church Street is quite unsuitable for a vehicular access and there are no other options. The “up to 9” homes allocation would not cause such severe problems.

For the above reasons EFFRA requests Guildford Borough Council to uphold Effingham’s Neighbourhood Plan and refuse this application. The Effingham Neighbourhood Plan has strong community support and residents are against any housing on this site above the “up to 9” agreed. EFFRA is concerned that the expressions of support may give an incorrect picture. We understand that almost all the support expressed for this application is by people with either a personal or family financial interest or were solicited by them (evidence can be supplied if required) and trust that the authority will disregard these expressions of support on this basis.

Yours sincerely

Effingham Residents Association (EFFRA)

Sent on its behalf by Vivien White, Chairman