FAO Jemma Foster, Planning Officer 13 September 2023

Development Control

Wiltshire Council

By email to: developmentmanagement@wiltshire.gov.uk

Dear Ms Foster,

RE: Application PL/2023/07310 – 62 Newtown, Westbury

We wish to object to the above application and set out our concerns below. We trust that our representations will be fully considered in the determination of this application.

THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

The proposed development involves the erection of up to 4 dwellings on the land. The application is made in outline with all matters reserved.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The site lies on the eastern peripherals of Westbury, which comprises a predominantly residential locality with neighbourhoods of low density housing that merges with the rural landscape beyond. Many of the dwellings are associated with large gardens and trees.

Newtown is an adopted highway with stretches of raised footway and framed by verges and extensive vegetation. The site consists of a detached two-storey set on land above the highway and with off-street parking via a driveway at the side leading to a detached garage. The garden land to the rear contributes to a sense of spaciousness within the locality and each surrounding dwelling has a useable rear garden.

REASONS FOR OBJECTION

Our grounds for objection relate to the following matters:

i. Character and appearance
ii. Impact on residential amenity
iii. Highway safety
iv. Loss of trees and impact on wildlife

Character and appearance

The Local Plan states that new development will be required to make a positive contribution towards improving the quality of the built environment. Amongst other things, proposals should include high-quality design that respects the character and appearance of the local area and include a level of architectural detail that gives buildings visual interest.

The main issue in this respect arise from the introduction of backland housing into the area. The location plan demonstrates that this garden and those to the south east as far as the last property at 96 Newtown are substantially free of development. To allow new dwellings on this land would be to set an undesirable precedent for more intensive housing, that would be to the detriment of the locality and amenity that the residents and community currently enjoy.

The overall approach of the scheme is over-engineered in comparison to the modest proportions of the existing house and the units to either side, with a large area of harsh and urbanising access shown, which would appear out of keeping with the street scene, and would be exacerbated due to the significant rise in topography from the public highway.

No other illustrative plans have been produced, but it is likely that the new houses would be visually dominant when viewed from the rear windows and gardens of residences to either side due to their mass, bulk and height. From these perspectives, the siting of the proposal would disrupt the

existing sense of space between the buildings and would not relate well to any of the existing dwellings in the immediate vicinity. Consequently, the resultant scale, form and massing of built form arising from the introduction of the house would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. It is our opinion that the harm would not be overcome by the use of complementary materials.



View of application site from Newtown

Overall, the proposed development would detract significantly from the character and appearance of the area, with four dwellings on a plot of land that currently holds a single house. The proposal would be completely out of keeping with the other dwellings in the vicinity in terms of layout, style and design, which are mostly modest properties in good size gardens. Due to these issues we do not believe that the scheme would integrate sensitively with its setting and for this reason we believe it is contrary to Local Plan policies, which infer that poor design or design that fails to take the opportunities available to improve the character and quality of an area and the way it functions will be refused.

Residential amenity

Local Plan policies state that, amongst other things, new development should minimise or mitigate environmental impacts for the benefit of existing and prospective occupants of neighbouring land. Such impacts may include loss of light, privacy or security or unacceptable noise, pollution, flooding or sense of enclosure.

This development would back on to my property and although there are large trees between the two we are concerned at the noise of having 2 new homes directly behind mine, with increased vehicular traffic and the noise typical of busy family homes. In the case of some residents beside the site the new builds would also overlook their gardens (in one case a pool) directly. Due to a lack of information, there is no certainty that the trees on the boundary would be retained, which further raises concerns regarding loss of privacy.

The removal of trees also raises issues regarding the scale of the proposal, which would significantly increase the size and scale of development facing our residence, adding material bulk and mass. In doing so, this would create a considerable extent of built form which would dominate the outlook from our rear windows and patio area in a manner which would be overbearing and oppressive, and materially worse than the existing state of affairs.

Trees and wildlife

As noted above, there are a number of trees on the site and we have concerns that if any permission is granted for this site, these trees may be tampered with and that during construction digging would damage any roots for such trees. Even if protection were provided the trees on the boundary at the rear would substantially overshadow the proposed rear gardens of plots 3 and 4, which would lead to pressure for them to be lopped or felled in the future. In addition construction deliveries would put the trees across the site under pressure. Overall, no arboricultural survey has been submitted with the application which makes it difficult to comment further on this matter.

The removal of all the trees and replacement with a large expanse of development would be deleterious to wildlife in the area. No ecological survey has been submitted and as such it is not possible to assess the impact on biodiversity and protected species, however the significantly wide ranging list of wildlife visitors to the site as reported by other objectors should be considered.

Highway safety

The road access onto Newtown appears to be dangerous, as cars tend to park both sides of the road on what is a busy thoroughfare to a popular beauty spot (the Westbury White Horse). We would anticipate people pulling out from the new development would be at significant risk of doing so with obstructed vision due to the parked cars in the area.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In summary, we strongly object to this proposal on the following grounds:

- The backland nature of the scheme and extent of development fails to take account of the site's sensitive location and arcadian character.
- The development is likely to result in an increased overlooking and would have an overbearing impact on the occupiers of neighbouring properties.
- The scheme would be likely to cause a loss of trees and effects on wildlife.
- There are highway safety issues.

Therefore we ask that the development be refused.

Yours sincerely

Mr & Mrs N Coward

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