Woodborough Parish Council - response to PL/2023/09215 - Underhill:

Woodborough Parish Council objects to this application for a large new dwelling which, contrary to Core Policy 51 would overlook and dominate its surroundings, not only the garden plot sitting alongside the undeveloped Church Farm Lane, but also the old established houses along Church Road to the west of the site, at the heart of the Conservation Area. The height of the proposed structure is such that it will dominate the existing bungalow, and overlook Cloud House to the west, to the detriment of the privacy and amenity of that household, contrary to the requirements of Core Policy 57. This could be ameliorated to a certain extent by the removal of the proposed first floor windows which, if allowed, will enable viewing directly into the first floor of Cloud House. The plans suggest that the proposed structure will be no higher than the neighbouring, existing dwelling but this seems to be incorrect, as Underhill is a bungalow whereas the proposal is for a two-storey dwelling.

The proposed structure is very close to the boundaries with Cloud House and Trine Cottage and would be better oriented north-south, to face the existing bungalow. Even so, the proposed ridge height and chimneys are such that it would be very visible from Church Road, whether residents, church-goers (regular, or for special events such as weddings and funerals), or walkers.

The construction of any approved design would involve heavy vehicular use of the lane and the parish council would expect a construction management plan to take account of, and responsibility for, repairing the ensuing damage to the road surface.

In addition, the parish council is concerned that an additional dwelling will increase long-term vehicular traffic along the narrow, single carriageway Church Farm Lane, which is a main route for pedestrian access to the bridleway, canal towpath and Woodborough Hill. The increase in traffic is rendered more hazardous by the lack of any turning provision in the proposals, obliging vehicles to reverse in and out of the proposed new driveway.

The parish council is concerned about the environmental impact of the proposal, with the loss of trees a poor outcome in itself, as well as the loss of habitat for birds and other wildlife. The parish is concerned to note that there are no bat surveys submitted with the application, especially as section 5.7 of the submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment notes the legal implications of disturbing bats; the parish council requests that a bat survey is ordered prior to this application progressing further. The parish council is surprised to note that the applicant has ticked ‘No’ to the application form question about the likelihood of protected species being affected by the proposal and considers that the application is invalid, as stated on the form, until a survey is completed.

Other concerns about the application detail relate to the Planning Statement which refers to knocking down some outbuildings which do not appear to exist; the parish council would appreciate clarification of which structure(s) is/are intended for demolition before the application proceeds further. The parish council is doubtful about the claim made in the Planning Statement that the proposed dwelling will be no higher than the existing building, as Underhill is a bungalow.

The reference to ‘two new dwellings’ in the Planning Statement (7.5) has been challenged and subsequently corrected by the architects, who have confirmed that this should refer to one new dwelling. The economic benefits claimed in this section to accrue to the village as a result of the proposal are not clear to the parish council; the architects have clarified that they define these benefits as ‘new residents using local services and facilities’; the parish council considers that there are too few local service and facilities to validate this definition.

The parish council considers that pre-planning advice should have been sought to pre-empt objections to this proposal which will have significant impact on the Conservation Area; several residents attended the meeting of the parish council held on 16th November to voice their concerns, which are supported by the parish council and reflected in this response.