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Comments on Planning Application 23/02122/FUL

The application is for a new development at 36 Hayward Road: Demolition of existing dwellinghouse. Erection of 2 x 5 bed dwellinghouses (Use Class C3). Provision of private amenity space, car parking, bin and cycle stores (amended plans)

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 Hayward Road. 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 application 23/02122/FUL in detail and finds it unacceptable in several respects. **WNF therefore objects to planning permission being granted.** The committee agrees with all the reasons for objecting already submitted by one of our members: Katherine Kaye. These reasons are reproduced below.

Reasons for objecting

This project is higher by a full storey than other houses on the street and is out of keeping in design with the rest of the street: particularly the frontages, which resemble large houses built on the Woodstock Road or the row of four on First Turn. The rooflines and Velux windows are egregious. The character of the street will be affected.

The project will cause shading and overlooking of its immediate neighbours while impinging on their sightlines. (See Local Plan Policy BEC2.)

Five bedrooms per house - with the possibility of retrofitting a 6th on the top floors - introduces the real possibility of 2 or more cars per household. Were permission to be given for the project there is reason to expect that the developer would then ask for additional parking spaces to be granted, whether in advance or retrospectively. As the site is on a cul-de-sac faced with double yellow lines additional vehicles will stress on-street parking elsewhere; vehicles turning will disrupt the neighbours and increase traffic.

Further, the project's size and provisions, coupled with the housing shortage in Oxford, risks incentivising a later change of use from C3 to C4 with additional vehicle parking requirements. (Even a covenant in the terms of sale forbidding this can be set aside by the courts.) The impact of this project on parking, traffic, and the street character appears to be underestimated.

The greatly enlarged footprint of the housing bloc is disproportionate. Not only will there be effects on neighbours, but it will affect biodiversity on the site and next to the green space the Plan aims to protect. It removes water and carbon storage from the plot's soil and impinges on the plot's ecosystem services to the house and environs. The effects of root disturbance and habitat disturbance from the building process on the trees and shrubs in the adjacent park are not assessed. The potential loss of mature trees and shrubs from the back garden is to be deprecated. The existing garden as a whole is a habitat with functions and characteristics that contribute to local biodiversity and as such its preservation is consistent with the Plan's policies and aims.

The significant carbon release and environmental costs of demolition and rebuilding in newly-manufactured materials, rather than refurbishing and reusing the existing structure, should be set against claimed environmental gains.

The Neighbourhood Plan is clear that even this size of development should not adversely affect biodiversity or neighbourhood well-being on the site.

This project is too large and too overt for this site. It should not be permitted.

From Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum Steering Committee

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

22 December 2023