

# Comments for Planning Application W/22/1877

## Application Summary

Application Number: W/22/1877

Address: Land at Warwickshire Police HQ, Woodcote Lane, Leek Wootton CV35 7QA

Proposal: Application for Outline Planning Permission for up to 83 dwellings ( including affordable housing), access, internal roads and footpaths, car parking, public openspace, landscaping, drainage and other associated works and infrastructure(all matters of details reserved except for the vehicular access to the site).

Case Officer: Dan Charles

## Customer Details

Name: Mr Mark Cooper

Address: 3 Waller Close Leek Wootton Warwick

## Comment Details

Commenter Type: Commentor

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment:

Dear Planning officer / Planning Committee member

I am a local resident and I object to Cala's planning application.

Key Points:

- The Green Belt status of the site was only altered in 2017 for "exceptional circumstances" - these circumstances are not met by Cala's planning application.

- Cala's application for partial development of the site (greenfield only) does not follow an agreed plan as required and is not compliant with the District Council's Local Plan policy (DS22).

- Cala's partial purchase of the site and planning application is speculative; its own planning statement recognises that its proposal is not compliant with the holistic approach of DS22.

- The District Council's planning team sought legal advice on the status of DS22 which confirms that "the current application cannot comply with all the provisions of Policy DS22".

- Partial development would lose the unique heritage opportunity to restore Woodcote House to its

former glory.

- Partial development coupled with the continued operation of a critical Police site would adversely affect traffic and safety on Woodcote Lane and the already hazardous Anchor junction.
- Cala's proposal would threaten local biodiversity, destroying trees, hedgerows and the habitat of a diverse range of birds and other wildlife.
- It is hard to see how the District Council could reasonably or lawfully approve Cala's application.

#### Background:

The Green Belt status of the site was only altered in 2017 for exceptional circumstances. The Government's Planning Inspector's report (the Inspector's Report) and the District Council's Local Plan policy for the site (DS22) were drafted on the explicit basis that Warwickshire Police would be vacating the site and that development would be in accordance with an agreed masterplan. Warwickshire Police received bids for the whole site. However, the Police Commissioner subsequently decided that Warwickshire Police will remain on site and opted instead to only sell a greenfield part of the site.

This change is significant as the proposed partial development would adversely affect the local community and wildlife. A masterplan that property specialists GVA produced for Warwickshire Police in 2016 was an instrumental part of: (a) consultation with the local community; (b) the assumptions behind: (i) the Inspector's Report; and (ii) the District Council's policy DS22 and explanatory notes.

#### Non-compliance with national or local planning policies:

Cala's proposal for partial development does not follow this masterplan (or any other agreed plan) and is thus not compliant with DS22. This is fundamental:

- Firstly, the "exceptional circumstances" for altering the green belt status assumed the proceeds from the sale of the whole site would provide a unique heritage opportunity to restore Woodcote House, a heritage Grade II listed building. The cost of demolition of the unsympathetic extensions and outbuildings plus the necessary restoration work would be substantial. Such an opportunity would be lost under Cala's partial development proposal contrary to DS22 (criteria h) which requires that the restoration occurs simultaneously or within a mutually acceptable timescale.
- Secondly, the traffic impact of the proposed partial development would be compounded locally, in

particular, on Woodcote Lane and at the already hazardous Anchor junction. Warwickshire Police remain at Woodcote House and run a critical operational site. The substantial net rise in cars will cause significant traffic problems and increase the safety risk to drivers, cyclists and pedestrians alike.

Cala's partial purchase of the site and planning application is speculative; its own planning statement recognises that its proposal is not compliant with the holistic approach of DS22. The District Council's planning team sought legal advice on the status of DS22 which confirms that "the current application cannot comply with all the provisions of Policy DS22".

Cala are pinning their hopes that you will view the Police Commissioner's decision for Warwickshire Police to remain on site as a "material consideration" which favours their application and "trumps" DS22. This argument is false and should be given no weight. For the heritage and traffic reasons set out above, the combined effect of Cala's partial development application next to the continuing operation of a critical Police site would be material but for the very reason that it would have a substantial adverse effect on the local community and wildlife.

A relevant material consideration for the District Council to consider would be the Government's White Paper on Planning reform. After much recent high profile political concern about planners ignoring local communities, the Government now intends to give local communities control over what is built, where it is built and what it looks like. In relation to the Green Belt, the White Paper sets out plans to empower local leaders and communities to enhance and maintain protection of the Green Belt. It states that ensuring natural beauty is accessible to all will be central to the planning system, with improved Green Belts around towns and cities, supported by Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

#### Environmental impact:

The proposed house numbers (83) - and likely density - is inappropriate for the village and that greenfield part of the Woodcote Estate. The removal of a large number of trees and hedgerows along Woodcote Lane would significantly impact on the approach to the village conservation area.

The threat to local biodiversity is alarming: it would see the unnecessary removal of large numbers of trees and destroy the habitat of a diverse range of birds and other wildlife.

#### Conclusion:

Cala's application is contrary to the District Council's Local Plan. Planning permission must be refused, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. No material considerations have been put forward of any substance to outweigh the conflict with the Local Plan. The substantial harm

caused from a heritage, traffic, safety and environmental perspective is not outweighed by the public benefits claimed by Cala.

It is hard to see how the District Council could reasonably or lawfully approve Cala's application.

I urge you to do the right thing and reject this application.

Yours sincerely

Mark Cooper