

# 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: Dr Siobhan Keenan

Address: Ivy Cottage, Woodcote Lane Leek Wootton Warwick

## Comment Details

Commenter Type: Commentor

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment:I am writing to object to planning application W/22/1877, as submitted by Cala Homes (seeking permission to build 83 homes on the Woodcote site, Leek Wootton). I outline the grounds of my objection below. They relate to the proposal's failure to comply with approved planning policies for the site and the impact of the proposed development on the character of the area, traffic generation, and the rural landscape.

This is the second application for the Woodcote site submitted by Cala Homes and it is very disappointing to see that they have engaged so little with the community both prior to the initial application (W/22/0465) and in the development of their revised application (W/22/1877). As they note in the new Planning Statement (p. 4, 1.10), there has been 'no further public consultation ... prior to the submission of this latest outline application'. This does not seem in keeping with the government's emphasis on putting local communities at the heart of local planning (Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill). Cala Homes suggest that they have responded to the multiple concerns raised by residents (following their initial planning application) in their 'Statement of Community Involvement', but this statement does not address some of the key issues raised by residents, including the following: the proposed housing density on the site, the design of the housing, and the impact of the proposed development on the rural landscape (including the impact on wildlife and the site's trees and hedgerows).

1. Conflict with DS22 in the Warwick District Local Plan and the Leek Wootton Neighbourhood Plan - As the revised application acknowledges (Planning Statement, p. 57, 7.40), the proposal is

in conflict with the current Development Plan for Woodcote, which accepted a proposal for 115 houses on the whole Woodcote site. Although the new plans propose a smaller number of houses in total (83) this is significantly greater than the number of houses originally proposed for the same area as part of the 2016 Master plan for the site (c.70). This, consequently, represents an increase in housing density for the plots and is not demonstrably 'proportionate', as required in the Leek Wootton Neighbourhood Plan, or in keeping with the generally lower housing density of the village. The minimum suggested density for such developments is 30 houses per hectare but Cala Homes has opted for a density of 36 houses per hectare. There was, therefore, room to reduce the density of the development, in keeping with the character of the village, while abiding by local planning expectations.

That the proposed housing density / lay-out is out of character with the village is, likewise, raised in the objection submitted by Sue Harrison on behalf of the Warwickshire County Council Landscape Team (19 December 2022): "The density of the housing still appears too great in relation to its surroundings. The houses appear to be crammed close together, with less garden space than the existing areas of the village abutting it. As this development sits on the edge of the village the housing density should be lower, acting as a transition from the more built-up areas of the village to the grounds of Woodcote House and the wider countryside beyond. The proposed houses on the tennis court site do not relate well to the existing houses on Woodcote Drive, both in terms of layout and density."

Despite concerns about the density of the housing development being raised as part of the initial public consultation process (and in the multiple objections submitted in response to Cala's initial planning application), this issue has not been addressed or changed in the newly submitted plans. This suggests that Cala is not interested in local residents' concerns or in modifying their plans in response to the feedback of local stakeholders.

The argument that 83 houses is fewer than the 115 houses originally planned for the whole Woodcote site is not a good enough rationale for increasing the housing density on the plots Cala now owns, especially in the absence of a new Master plan for the Woodcote site as a whole.

2. Traffic Generation / Negative Highways Impact - The latest commissioned Travel Assessment concludes that there 'are no inherent existing highway safety concerns in the vicinity' of the proposed site 'that could be exacerbated by the proposed development'. However, this is not in line with the lived experience of most villagers who have testified to the dangers associated with the Warwick Road/ Woodcote Lane junction, both because of the narrowness of Woodcote Lane at this point and because of the poor visibility for those making a right turn onto Warwick road. As a resident living in the house at this junction, I can confirm the dangers of this junction. There are regular near misses as cars turn right out of Woodcote Lane and regular issues with vehicles being dangerously close to each other at the entry to Woodcote Lane. This has led to our house (Ivy Cottage, a Grade II listed property) being struck twice in the last year, as large vehicles struggle to pass the overhanging thatched roof when vehicles are coming in the opposite direction.

An increase in the volume of the traffic using the junction is going to increase the odds of further damage to our listed property (which directly abuts the road) and, more worryingly, to the chances of accidents at this junction, as well as posing a risk for pedestrians who have to cross Woodcote Lane at its lower end to access Warwick Road and destinations such as the Primary School.

The revised transport assessment also makes no reference to some of the proposals for managing traffic on Woodcote Lane in the Leek Wootton Neighbourhood Plan (pp. 56-7), if new housing was developed on the Woodcote site, suggesting that residents' concerns and their solutions (as embodied in the Neighbourhood Plan) have not been considered, as might be expected, according to the government guidance on approved neighbourhood plans (see: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2>).

3. Impact on the rural landscape (Trees & Hedgerows) - Although Cala Homes has modified its Tree Protection and Removal plan since its original application, the revised plan still includes proposals to remove a number of significant protected trees and hedgerows. This is highlighted in the objection submitted by Sue Harrison (on behalf of Warwickshire County Council Landscape Team) (23 December 2022): 'the Tree Protection and Removal Plans show a number of individual trees and groups of trees to be removed, including a veteran sweet chestnut (T8), several category A oaks and a number of category B trees, all of which have significant landscape and ecological value.' Cala also proposes removing multiple hedgerows. The removal of so many established trees and hedgerows is not in keeping with the Warwick District Local Plan which calls for developments to 'protect and where possible enhance the natural environment', including 'natural features', including trees (p. 83, section 5 on Sustainable Communities'). In the view of Miss Harrison the plans are not, therefore, 'truly landscape-led and they contravene policy NE4 of the Local plan.' On this basis, she recommends 'that the layout and density of the development is amended to allow for retaining all existing category A and B trees within the site and along the boundaries, and that more space is provided for meaningful tree planting of large stature native species within the development. The retention of existing trees will enable the development to be better assimilated into its surroundings and will strengthen the link between the site, the grounds to the Police HQ and the wider Arden Parklands landscape.'

4. Design and Access / Character of the Area - The Leek Wootton Neighbourhood Plan stipulates that developments in the village should be 'proportionate to the size and character' of the village (p.46). Cala's Planning Statement claims that their proposed house designs 'respect the character, appearance and built vernacular of the local area', but this is not reflected in the Design and Access Statement which provides very limited information about the proposed design of the houses and/or how it might draw upon, or reflect, the 'built vernacular of the local area'.

As I noted in my response to the original planning application (W/22/0465), the Design and Access document should outline the process that has led to the development proposal and provide a rationale for the overall design, but the Cala statement does not do this. There is only a very brief account of 'the built vernacular of the local area' and little explanation of how the proposed design

of the development is intended to be sympathetic to, or in keeping with, this vernacular, with only brief mention being made of the planned use of 'mostly red brick' and some white and black weather boarding (5.18). As it stands, the Design and Access document provides no significant evidence of the proposed designs being tailored to the village and its 'built vernacular', and the proposed high-density of the housing is not in keeping with the rest of the village, as noted above (point 1).

Overall, given the serious issues outlined above, I continue to object strongly to the current planning application and recommend that it is rejected and significant revision required, in consultation with the community and with far closer attention paid to the established plans for development in the village, as outlined in the Leek Wootton Neighbourhood plan and the Warwick District Local Plan.

It is a great pity that Cala did not take the opportunity of engaging in this consultation as they prepared their second planning application. It might have saved everyone (including them) time as well as money.