

Planning Application for 18/18a Tekels Park – 18/0616
Summary of Objections

1 Introduction

This document has been prepared on behalf of the residents of Tekels Avenue and Tekels Park, who are principally affected by this Planning Application. 31 Objections were originally received by the Council opposing this proposal, and there has been significant further objections posted to the Council or directly to members of the Planning Committee subsequently. Opposition to this proposal is near unanimous in the affected areas. We will be presenting our objections at the Planning Committee Meeting on 10th January, 2019.

2 Street Scene and Design

“The development proposed, by virtue of the scale and massing of the buildings would result in an incongruous, dominant and overly urbanised pocket of development which would fail to respect and enhance the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including the semi-rural and verdant character of the Wooded Hills Character Area”

REFUSAL for Planning Application 14/0621 21-25 TEKELS PARK, CAMBERLEY, GU15 2LE that included a two storey detached building to comprise 4 duplex apartments, dated 23/9/14.

The above is an elegant summary of the potential impact of the proposed development, except that what is now proposed is more than twice the size of the planning application previously rejected, whilst being essentially in the same location.

Tekels Park is covered by the Western Urban Area Character Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2012 and in particular within the Wooded Hills Character Area.

Guiding principle WH1 proposes that new development should be principally two storey detached buildings in individual plots. The proposed development is a two/three storey apartment block, and not individual buildings in their own plots.

Guiding principle WH2, amongst other criteria, states that development forms contrary to the prevailing development forms should be resisted. There are no substantial apartment blocks in Tekels Park, and no flat roof structures either, both characteristics of this planning application. The flat roof will be not be a positive contribution to the streetscape as asserted in the Planning Officer's report as it is completely at odds with the surrounding houses. It is merely proposed in order to reduce what would otherwise be an unacceptable height to the building.

The corten panels proposed are completely alien to the Park, where existing construction is essentially of brick, stone and wood, and this steel fronted industrial type structure is totally out of keeping. Also, the panels are stated as giving a bronzed finish when in reality they give a very unsightly rusty appearance which stains materials coming into contact with them. There are also environmental concerns about corten steel once it has been incorporated into buildings. A study published in [Environmental Pollution](#) found that water runoff from weathering steel may cause problems in the local aquatic environment. The study found that the additional amounts of nickel, iron, and manganese in the area local to a weathering steel building were “not negligible.” This issue has not been addressed at all in the Planning Officer's Report or in prior environmental surveys.

Paragraph 56 of the NPPF concerns good design. It states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute

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positively to making places better for people. Paragraph 58 states that planning policies and decision should aim to ensure that developments:

- Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development
- Establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit
- Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development
- Respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.

This proposed building satisfies none of those principles.

3 Layout, Scale and Density

The Planning Officer's Report seeks to equate the extant permission (SU16/1115) with the current proposal in terms of layout and scale. This comparison is invalid, as there is an 11m gap in the extant permission between the two developments, which completely alters the entire massing effect. This point is best expressed with the following two illustrations:

Proposed Street Scene



Extant Permission Street Scene



The Planning Officer also draws comparison to the Guest House as an established wider building in the area. However this is not a domestic dwelling, was built long before the Wooded Hills Character Area policy was adopted, and would never have been accepted under its provisions.

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Guiding principle WH2 also states that net densities above 9 dph are considered out of keeping with the soft enclosed, semi-rural character. The proposed development is on a plot of 0.4 hectares, and therefore has a density of 25 dph (not about 20 as stated in the Planning Officer's Report). In practice, a considerable part of this plot is not actually available for construction due to its nature, so the effective plot size from the point of view of massing is nearer to 0.2 hectares, giving an effective dph of nearer 50. The Planning Officer's argument that principle 6.4 of the RDG seeks to achieve the highest possible densities is completely negated by the qualifying phrase, which insists that this must be 'without compromising local character'

4 Parking

The current plans for 12 parking spaces, whilst in accordance with planning provision, will in practice be totally inadequate. The likely owners would be working couples who would invariably be two car households and would need more visitor parking than provisioned. The development is too far from schools, shops and railway station to assume pedestrian access would be satisfactory – it being a 1.2 mile walk up and down two steep hills to Camberley Station and along dangerous roads (see below).

Parking on the very narrow access roads in Tekels Park would inevitably ensue, would lead to a loss of amenity for existing residents, and would become a safety concern to the young families currently living opposite the proposed development. Street parking will further compromise access to emergency and other vehicles. It would not be unreasonable to assume that, were this development to be approved, it would likely lead to post development pressure for further tree removal to augment the site parking. It thus conflicts with the objectives of the Western Urban Area character SPD and NPPF.

5 Road and Pedestrian Safety

A major area of concern is the increase in traffic this and subsequent developments will generate along Tekels Avenue and into Tekels Park. The Planning Officer's Report asserts that Highways have raised no objections to the proposal. The document actually reads "The application site is accessed via Tekels Drive (!), which is a private road and does not form part of the public highway, therefore it falls outside The County Highway Authority's jurisdiction", so in fact no opinion was expressed.

The issue of accidents along the road, and near misses, has prompted the community to pay for a private traffic safety survey and to consult widely with residents about their driving experiences along the road. Two accidents in recent years have resulted in insurance claims of £6,000 and £19,000, both caused by construction vehicles driving on the wrong carriageway. A quick survey of 29 residents revealed 27 had had an accident or near miss on Tekels Avenue in the past year, these 27 people having had 163 driving incidents in total on Tekels Avenue in that period.

The road is poorly lit, and not at all suitable for pedestrians as it has no pavements and has no safe place to stand on the 90 degree bend when two vehicles pass. The road is not safe to walk along in the dark as a recent serious attack has evidenced. 25 of our survey respondents have had a near miss whilst walking on Tekels Avenue in the past year, reporting a total of 146 incidents. This is a worrying situation for home owners to have to contend with on a daily basis.

We must also consider the real danger that large construction vehicles pose on Tekels Avenue, which has a 90 degree blind bend without enough room for a large vehicle and a car to safely pass. This is evidenced by a swept path analysis commissioned by the Tekels Community Association which showed that it was impossible for vehicles larger than 7.5

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tonnes to safely navigate the bend, and to even pass at certain pinch points on the road. Buildings of the nature proposed will inevitably involve multiple deliveries using 40 tonne and larger vehicles. It is not unusual for large vehicles to completely block Tekels Avenue or Tekels Park, and also to reverse (without a flagman) the mile length of it because it is impossible for them to turn. This situation potentially blocks the passage of emergency vehicles, and there was a recent incident where carers were prevented from visiting a seriously ill resident in Tekels Park. We accept that some construction traffic is inevitable, but this proposal would seriously exacerbate an existing problem.

As residents we have become increasingly concerned about the level of traffic on this poorly lit road which has no pavements, and we have yet to see the impact of the extra 20+ cars per day from the under-construction Walled Garden. If development were to be in accordance with recommended Wooded Hills Character Area densities then increased volumes can be absorbed if carefully managed, but we maintain that the additional vehicles generated by this proposal and similar ones that it will generate will add unacceptable risk to other road users.

6 Environment and Amenity Impact

Historically, Tekels Park has always been a place of retreat and eco diversity. It is one of the last green corridors and only Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) within the Camberley Town Centre ward. A negative impact on the environment and loss of biodiversity including of protected species are likely to arise from the proposed overdevelopment, as a result of an increase in dog walking, general recreational use and damage to the habitat within the designated area. A thriving bat colony has already been lost due to development. However, this issue has not been addressed in the Planning Officer's report.

The hardstanding parking provision, whilst inadequate for this development in our opinion, is a concern and an eyesore to properties 21 and 23a who will look upon this and will have a significant impact on their amenity, as will the unsightly bin stores opposite no 21. Pictures in the Planning Officer's report are not of no 21 which is the property most affected by this development but of 23a and 23b who are set back much further than 21.

No assessment appears to have been made of the impact on utility services in Tekels Park, and in particular in areas where there are already existing issues, such as:

- Water pressure
- Sewerage
- Broadband speeds and stability

We appreciate that these are not regarded as planning issues, but they do have a fundamental impact on the residents of Tekels Park, and the current piece by piece development approval process is exacerbating these concerns.

Whilst the Planning Officer has considered the potential impact of noise from the M3, he has not considered the amenity impact on the near neighbours of the additional noise that will be generated from increased refuse collection (potentially in larger vehicles), increased traffic noise from new residents and shopping deliveries, slamming car doors, etc. The right to peaceful enjoyment of the environment and ambience of Tekels Park, a considerable factor in many people acquiring properties in the area, will be seriously compromised.

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7 Precedent and Strategic Impact

When granting approval to the Tekels Park Walled Garden Development (17/1031), which comprised mainly semi-detached dwellings, on fairly regular plots, without side gardens, and of considerably higher density than surrounding dwellings, the Planning Officer acknowledged that the proposal was not in line with many of the Guiding Principles of the Wooded Hills Housing Character Area. However, she considered that given the **unusual and unique** setting of the application site with the locally listed wall surrounding it, **that an exception could be made to some elements of the character guidance**, taking into account also the benefit to the wall that would result.

Leaving aside the argument as to whether the Walled Garden development should ever have been approved in the form that it was, no such exception exists or has been claimed for the current proposal. We were assured that the Walled Garden development would NOT be used as a precedent for any future applications, and yet this very precedent was clearly cited in the Planning Application.

The SPD clearly states 9 dph as the maximum density acceptable in the Wooded Hills Character Area. The Walled Garden development in the end was around 20 dph. The current proposal is for a density of 25 dph (or 50 dph if you discount the unusable land and focus on the actual development site itself). There is clearly a major density escalation, and whatever the council says about “each application being treated on its own merits” approval for the current proposal WILL establish a precedent with no exceptional characteristics.

Approval of this application will inevitably lead to further applications for blocks of flats or high density construction in Tekels Park and the wider Wooded Hills Character Area, which will be increasingly hard to resist. Indeed, approval will effectively sign the death warrant for the Wooded Hills Character Area SPD policy. The core of the issue is all about maintaining a sustainable density for this unique area. Adding to the risk of a negative impact to the environment and ambience of Tekels Park will be proposals to open up new road access points into the Park, thus further exacerbating traffic, noise and pollution issues.

It is the existence of policies such as the Wooded Hills Character Area that enable development to be controlled at a strategic level, and to resist development ‘creep’ and the salami effect of treating each application on its own merits. The Council needs to acknowledge this point, and if it is not prepared to back and enforce the Wooded Hills Character Area, then it needs to consult and replace it with proposals workable in the current environment.

8 Conclusion

Even leaving aside the strategic impact of approval, this current proposal is badly flawed on numerous counts, as set out in this document. We believe that we have addressed at least 13 issues that are generally considered valid objections in a planning context.

We are not anti-development, just in favour of **appropriate** development, and we recognise that the Council is under severe pressure to increase the number of dwellings in the Borough. A perfectly good development proposal that meets the Wooded Hills Character Area in terms of density and most other criteria exists, and has been approved for this site (SU/16/1115). We urge the Council to REFUSE the current application and urge the developer to get on with implementing the extant permission.

* Please note that our submission is in respect of the proposed development. While we have taken every effort to present accurate information for your consideration, as we are not a decision maker or statutory consultee, we cannot accept any responsibility for unintentional errors or omissions.