

19-00832-REM - 'LAND ADJACENT TO SUMMERFIELD' RESIDENTS REPRESENTATION

With two years before outline permission expires, there's no urgency to approve wholly inappropriate plans that would have a devastating impact on the village of Cold Ash.

Rarely do rural sites receive such large numbers of objections, highlighting massive public concern. Indeed, were this a public hearing, the galleries would be full.

Original Reserved Matters were refused in October 2018 under Mr Gary Lugg, then Head of Development and Planning. The accompanying report detailed the following grounds for refusal.

'The overall scale and massing of the new dwellings would be significantly larger and higher than existing dwellings within this part of the village.'

'External appearance and massing would urbanise the village'

'Large dwellings on this prominent site would be out of character and detrimental to this rural village location'

'The scale of the buildings would adversely affect the amenity of existing dwellings'

Latest plans do nothing to address these issues. The only two changes of any significance were required to correct the developers misguided plans. Namely, garages sited forward of the outline curtilage, and ridge heights only appropriate for an urban environment. Other changes merely tinker with detail, doing nothing to reduce excessive bulk of built form.

Gross External Area of each proposed house remains a massive 39% larger than the average of surrounding dwellings on the southern side of The Ridge, where the building style comprises alternating bungalows and small houses. The proposed development would result in a monolithic slab of bricks and mortar, five equally-sized large houses that would not associate well with the existing eclectic mix of dwellings, and urbanise the eastern gateway.

No amount of tree-planting can screen houses that are simply too large. Furthermore, the proposed access scheme will destroy the frontage hedgerow, which currently affords the only natural screen; totally unnecessary given that access already exists.

Residents therefore find it hard to fathom why these plans are now recommended for approval.

At Outline, Mr Derek Carnegie gave assurance that sound architectural design and planning judgement would be brought to bear to ensure sympathetic development of the site. The plans before you today are precisely what Councillors Pick, Bryant, Beck and Simpson warned of at that time.

A solution does exist, whereby the developer profits from dwellings on this highly desirable site, without unduly impacting the village and the amenity of local residents. Three successive case officers have considered 1½ storey houses with bungalows at either end to be appropriate. Yet the developer has pushed incessantly for massive houses that the site simply cannot sustain. Residents are fully accepting of this development, so long as scale and mass are appropriate, and the existing hedgerow preserved intact.

Residents ask that you reject the plans before you to ensure the site is developed responsibly. We only get one shot at this. We simply cannot afford to get it wrong.

Concerned residents of Cold Ash