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Clerk: Ruth Davies

5 August 2021

Dear Michael

Application 21/02263: Courtleigh Manor House and Courtleigh House Lady Margaret Road Sunningdale Ascot
Erection of a replacement building containing 10 apartments with associated landscaping and basement parking and alteration to vehicular and pedestrian access following demolition of existing apartment building and attached dwelling.

The Planning Committee considered this application at its meeting on 3 August 2021 and **strongly objects** to this application.

Courtleigh Manor House and Courtleigh House sit in a corner plot bounded by Charters Road and Lady Margaret Road (see below).



These existing properties are well positioned in the site and blend comfortably in the street scene, with a feeling of openness in keeping with the townscape of 'Leafy Residential Suburbs' (see below pictures of the existing properties).



The Existing Building 'Courtleigh Manor'



The Existing Building 'Courtleigh Manor' - Road junction of Lady Margaret Road & Charters Road



The Existing Car Parking Area



The Existing Access off Charters Road serving the garage



The proposed development is for a replacement building containing 10 apartments, as shown in the pictures below. The new apartment block comprises three storeys with four apartments on the ground floor, three apartments on the first floor, and the remaining three apartments within the roof space on the second floor.



Side Elevation



Rear Elevation



The view of this proposed apartment block within the site is shown below.



It is immediately obvious that this apartment block completely dominates the street scene as demonstrated by the following pictures.



Our planning objections are described below, using references from The Ascot, Sunninghill & Sunningdale Neighbourhood Plan (NP):-

1. Respecting the Townscape (NP/DG1)

The key characteristics of 'Leafy Residential Suburbs' include:

- Low to medium density residential suburbs with characteristic 'leafy' streets.
- The leafy suburban character is reinforced by well-established private gardens (including mature trees/shrubs), that are often bounded by tall beech or laurel hedges. This provides a strong sense of enclosure and privacy to dwellings
- Views are framed along leafy streets – street tree planting and/or trees and shrubs within front gardens allow only occasional glimpses to dwellings.
- A quiet and peaceful residential suburb

According to **NP/DG1** Development proposals should respond positively to the local townscape.

The proposed apartment block represents a doubling of the gross internal area of the existing properties on this site.

The footprint has increased substantially, and the proposed building fills the plot resulting in a significantly reduced garden and green space between the apartment block and the plot boundaries.

The ridge height of the block, whilst matching the ridge height of the existing property along the Lady Margaret Road boundary, rises significantly above this level along the Charters Road boundary.

It is the build density and massing effect of this block that would be completely at odds with the townscape, and therefore contrary to policies

NP/DG1.2 *In Townscape Assessment Zones Leafy Residential Suburbs, Villas in a Woodland Setting and Executive Residential Estates, residential development should comprise low or very low-density developments of detached houses, unless it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that other forms of development would retain the identified character of the area. In the context of this policy, these houses are defined as being dwellings for occupation typically by a single household, each house sitting in its own plot with a garden for its exclusive use. This policy shall apply even in areas within these zones where other types of dwellings may also exist.*

NP/DG1.3 *Development proposals in Townscape Assessment zones Leafy Residential Suburbs and Villas in a Woodland Setting should retain and enhance the sylvan, leafy nature of the area, which, where possible and appropriate, should include the planting of trees and/or shrubs along the street and neighbouring sites boundaries.*

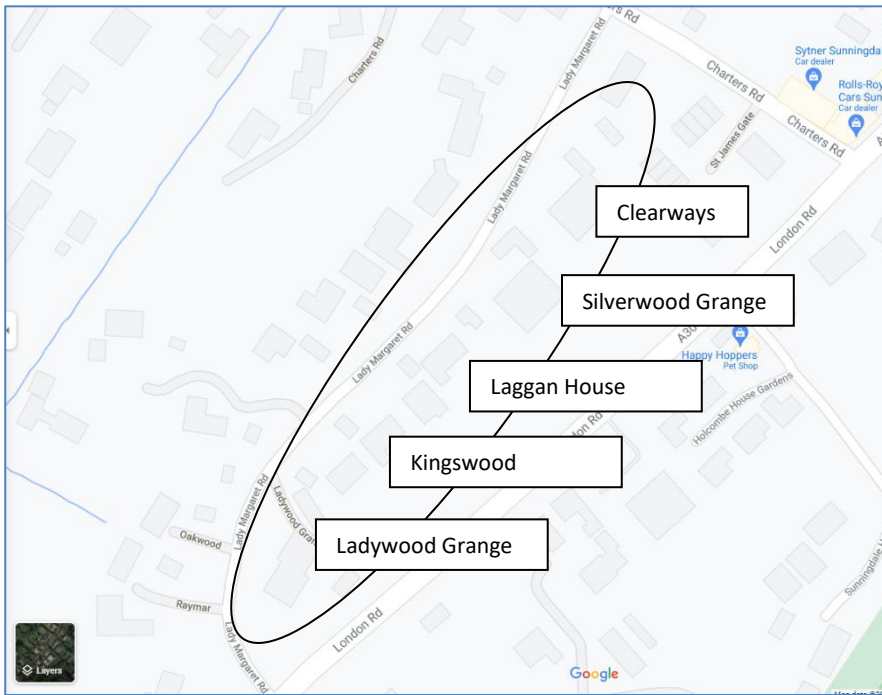
In our view this apartment block would be very dominant in the street scene and detrimental to the leafy suburban character of this area.

2. Density, Footprint, Separation, Scale, Bulk (NP/DG2)

"The trend in the last few years has been for new developments to be built to a much higher density than that which is the norm for our village. To ensure that new development responds to local character and is in keeping with the surrounding area, new developments should be sensitively positioned in their plots and do not dominate, in height and bulk the street scene or the neighbouring properties".

This proposal, with its dominance and density, does not comply with this policy. The predominant type of housing along the eastern side of Lady Margaret Road is already apartment blocks. In the main, these blocks are well positioned in their plots, set back from the site boundaries and with 'leafy' characteristics.

This can be seen in the street layout and pictures of the properties along the eastern side of Lady Margaret Road.



The following pictures of the apartment blocks within this area are shown below and demonstrate this openness and leafiness.



Clearways



Silverwood Grange



Laggan House



Kingswood



Ladywood Grange

The build density and massing effect of this proposed development would be contrary to policies [DG2.1](#) and [DG2.2](#)

NP/DG2.1 *New development should be similar in density, footprint, separation, scale, and bulk of the buildings to the density footprint, separation, scale, and bulk of buildings in the surrounding area generally and of neighbouring properties in particular, unless it can be demonstrated that the proposed development would not harm local character.*

NP/DG2.2 All new development must respect:

- (a) Established building lines and arrangements of front gardens, walls, railings, or **hedges**, where such features are important to the character and appearance of the area*
- (b) Established plot widths within streets where development is proposed, particularly where they establish a rhythm to the architecture in a street*
- (c) The separation between buildings, and between buildings and the site boundaries, in relation to likely impact on the privacy and amenity of neighbouring properties.*

The site currently has an existing hedge boundary along with a few trees along the frontage. The rear of the site also consists of hedging and tree screening providing an enclosed and secure site. The Design and Access statements mentions “As part of the development there is the opportunity to replace this hedgerow with a native beech hedge, which would fit in with the character assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan and provide increased benefits for biodiversity”. This would need to be reinforced through a planning condition.

3. NP/DG3 Good Quality Design

This Policy encourages developers to contribute to the rich variety of architectural styles in the village whilst at the same time designing developments which are ‘sympathetic to the existing character of the area’.

The aim is to challenge developers to deliver innovative development of high-quality design that responds to its surroundings and is appropriate for our area.

The proposed apartment block, as can be seen from the pictures above, is based on a collection of build elements described by the applicant as in ‘The Arts & Crafts style’. Contrary to the statement made in the Design and Access statement, the Parish Council does not agree that ‘the proposed design of the building would be in keeping with the surrounding area’. We believe that this style is out of keeping with, and not sympathetic to, other developments along this road as shown in the photos above.

This proposed development is contrary to other elements of this policy in the areas of

- Innovative design that is sustainable in its design, construction, and operation
- Promoting high quality interior spaces and light

4. NP/T1 Parking and Access

This policy aims to stop any further reliance on on-street parking on narrow or highly trafficked roads and additional pressure on the already inadequate parking capacity in our village, as well as ensuring adequate safe access for service and delivery vehicles.

The proposed block of apartments has underground parking for 15 vehicles (for ten x 2 bed apartments) with 2 parking spaces at ground level outside.

According to the DoE parking standards, this is the bare minimum requirement (1.5 spaces per 2 bed apartment) – assuming the parking spaces are communal and unassigned spaces. If the spaces are ‘assigned’ then this figure should increase to 1.75 spaces per 2 bed apartment. No statement is made by the applicant on whether these are assigned or unassigned spaces.

There are only two parking spaces for visitors, delivery or emergency vehicles, and limited space for lorries, trucks, and any vehicles to manoeuvre within the site.

This lack of parking provision is contrary to policy **NP/T1**

NP/T1.1 Development proposals must make adequate provision for parking and access for deliveries, service vehicles, tradesmen working on-site and social visitors as well as for residents or workers.

NP/T1.2 Development proposals must, wherever possible, provide adequate parking on-site and not rely on on-street parking. Development that includes a reliance on parking on existing streets shall not be permitted where the streets are narrow, already heavily trafficked, have identified parking issues, or where such on-street parking would impact on the safety of road users or adversely impact the character of the area.

5. NP/EN3 Gardens

Gardens are an important village characteristic and greatly valued as contributing to the sylvan nature of our environment and our green and leafy surroundings. This is particularly true of any areas within the townscape of 'Leafy Residential Suburbs'.

As can be seen from the site layout, the proposed block significantly exceeds the footprint of the existing properties. This has resulted in a dramatic erosion of garden/ amenity space within the site.

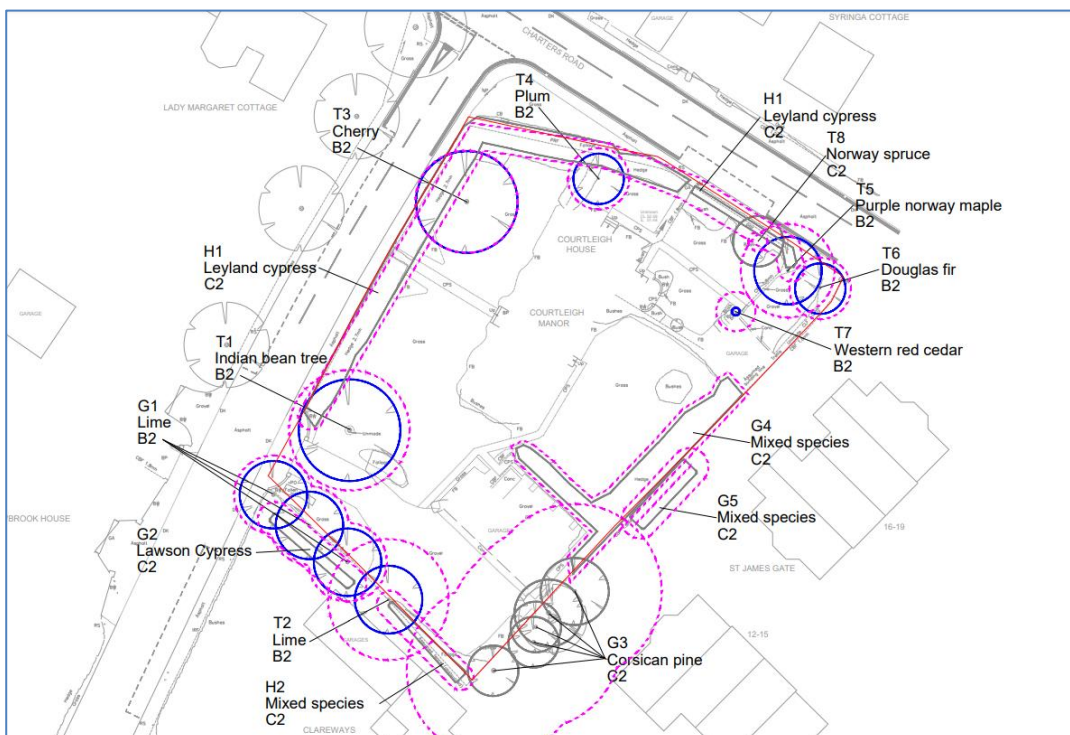
This lack of amenity space is contrary to this policy.

NP/EN3 Proposals for new dwellings on private residential gardens should: (a) Not result in an unacceptable reduction of the green space created by the garden itself or in combination with surrounding gardens AND (b) Not result in an unacceptable impact on the landscape and environmental value of the site.

6. NP/EN2 Trees

The Arboricultural Report highlights the intention to remove several very visible trees to make way for this development; namely T3, T4 and T7. Whilst these trees do not have the benefit of TPOs, their removal would significantly alter the character of this area. The justification given in the Arboricultural Report that these category B trees are likely to decline to become category C trees in the future is not justification for their removal.

See Tree Survey Plan below.



7. Thames Basin Heaths SPA

This development falls within 5km of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. Therefore, a Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG) must be provided as a way of reducing recreational pressure on the SPA, as well as a financial contribution towards strategic access management and monitoring.

8. Loss of privacy/ Loss of Light

The applicant states in their planning Statement that “it is not considered that the proposal would harm the amenities of any neighbours in terms of loss of light, loss of privacy or from appearing overbearing”.

However, no data is provided as part of the application to demonstrate that this is indeed the case.

9. NP/Section 7.2 Sunningdale Village Strategy

There is a strong sense of community in Sunningdale, which residents are keen to retain, and a desire to protect the character of the area – both its green and leafy surroundings and the built environment.

One of the key issues was “The adverse impact the increase in flatted developments is having on the character of the area and the amenity of residents”.

The Parish Council note that the three most recent Planning Appeal decision notices that have been recorded for Sunningdale by the Planning Inspectorate have all been refused for the same reason.

In these decisions, all of which were dismissed, the Inspector has stated:

'The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.'

As we have outlined, whilst we have many objections to the proposed application one of our primary concerns is the scale, bulk, and size of the proposed building and especially how it will negatively affect the character and appearance of Lady Margaret Road and Charters Road. It is therefore reassuring to note that the current reference points that are being used by the Planning Inspectorate in refusing Planning Appeals place an extremely high emphasis on exactly this point.

We have listed these Appeal decisions notices below.

**1. 20/02944, Decision date: 14 July 2021, Appeal Ref: APP/TO355/D/21/3270394, 57 Halfpenny Lane, Sunningdale, Ascot, SL5 OEG.
REFUSED.**

The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

**2. 20/02434, Decision date: 09 July 2021 Appeal Ref: APP/TO355/W/20/3265991, Wilbury Cottage, Beech Hill Road SL5 OBN.
REFUSED.**

The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

**3. 20/00780, Decision date: 09 July 2021 Appeal Ref: APP/TO355/W/20/3265865 Hill House, Cross Road, Sunningdale SL5 9RX.
REFUSED**

The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

We ask that this application is **Refused**.

Yours sincerely

Yvonne Jacklin and Michael Burn
Co-Chairs of the Planning Committee