



The Planning Inspectorate
3/B Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol
BS1 6PN



Issued via the Planning Inspectorate online portal 1st February 2025

For the attention of G Chamberlain BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

Dear Sirs,

Re: Murreys Court, 10, Agates Lane, Ashtead, Surrey, KT21 2NF

Planning Application reference: MO/2023/1539

Appeal Reference: APP/C3620/W/24/3351839

I have recently been selected to be the Ashtead Residents Association (ARA) Planning Officer, the previous ARA officer, Roger Bennett, submitted a letter of representation with regard to the original planning application on 20th November 2023. A further letter of representation was also submitted by the ARA on 19th February 2024.

The ARA wish to state their continued objection to the Murrey's Court development plans that are now under appeal.

Our objections were stated in the earlier letters but we wish to add the following comments.

The Mole Valley Local Plan adopted October 2024, Chapter 9 Development Site Allocations includes the Murreys Court site as Policy DS3 and refers to an allocation of 30 dwellings on this site.

Policy DS3 also includes the following requirement:

"In addition to meeting the policies in the plan, any developer of this site will be required to:

- 1. Retain and reuse existing buildings on eastern part of site (the Grade II Listed barn, the Locally Listed No. 10 Murreys Court and the Locally Listed brick wall and the outbuildings.*
- 2. Conserve or enhance the setting of the Grade II listed barn within the site and nearby listed buildings on Agates Lane".....*

The application under appeal is proposing the construction of new buildings comprising 60 assisted living units (Class C2) and a 66 bed care home (Class C2). This is vastly more than the indicative allocation of 30 dwellings, the ARA consider this to be significant overdevelopment.



The application proposes to retain the Grade II listed Barn, but 10 Murreys Court and the other buildings referred to in Policy DS3 are proposed to be demolished.

We consider the overdevelopment and loss of the important heritage buildings to be material for the following reasons. The proposed number of buildings and their placement on what is a very open plot in a built up area will impact on many inter-related issues.

A scheme exceeding the density as allocated in DS3 will cause environmental harm, impact on local traffic and transportation and increase strain on already over-subscribed local amenities and healthcare facilities.

In assessing the impact of this development on the local area we would also request that the Inspector takes account of the Site allocations noted in DS1 and DS2 of the local plan. These plots are located some 1700m to the South East of the Murrey's Court site. DS1 and DS2 are to the South East of the main A24 road and DS3 is to the North West of the A24.

Policy DS1, Land South of Ermyn Way suggests an indicative capacity of 370 dwellings and 3 Gypsy and Traveller pitches, Policy DS2 Ermyn House with an indicative capacity of 140 dwellings and 3 Gypsy and Traveller pitches.

An outline planning application for the DS1 site was registered with MVDC planning department on 8th January 2025. It is also likely that the DS2 land will be brought forward in due course.

As we believe these significant schemes are likely to be progressed in the coming years the cumulative impact of the three sites should be considered.

There will be an impact on local traffic which is already severely congested, in part due to heavy traffic volumes using the A24 which connects to the M25 and provides a route through Ashtead Village and on to Epsom. Increased congestion on local minor roads as well as the A24 is further exacerbated by the presence of 3 schools in close proximity, as well as 2 more schools slightly further away. Traffic movement at most times of the day is affected but principally from 7.30am to 9.30am and 3.00pm to 7.00pm. Adding more traffic as the DS1, DS2 and DS3 sites are developed will have a significant cumulative impact.

Limiting the scale of the DS1, DS2 and DS3 development sites as per the 2020-2039 Local Plan was no doubt very carefully considered by MVDC, and they have arrived at a balance across the whole of Ashtead taking all factors into consideration.

Whilst the planning process has also considered the impact the Murreys Court development may have on ecology, much of the site has been open land since Murreys Court was built. Indeed, parts of the building date back to the 17th and 18th Century when it was a farm/farmhouse, i.e open land. As Ashtead developed the surrounding Lanes were developed, but the Murrey's Court plot remained open and therefore a haven for nature. Between 1983 and 1990 a large part of the Murreys Court land was sold and developed into an "estate", The Murreys, lying to the North West of the site. This removed a significant open area at that time and concentrated the ecologically important area into what remained of the gardens to Murrey's Court.



There are many species of animals, birds and insects that inhabit the area, the development proposals will add more buildings and the construction work will extend across the whole site area and excavate hundreds of years of largely undisturbed land. The site has also been relatively unoccupied in recent years and the amount of wildlife inhabiting the land has potentially increased in the period since the planning application reports were prepared.

The ecology report submitted with the application refers to bat activity as well as Badger setts. Both being important species requiring protection. The MVDC Newt Officer also submitted a report confirming that there is a potential for Great Crested Newts to inhabit the area.

The Newt officer report conclusion states:

“Summary - The development falls within the amber impact risk zone for great crested newts. Impact risk zones have been derived through advanced modelling to create a species distribution map which predicts likely presence. In the amber impact zone, there is suitable habitat and a high likelihood of great crested newt presence”.

We feel that the historical open nature of this site has not been given sufficient emphasis to date. There are also routes across neighbouring land that enable wildlife to exist in the centre of the Ashtead Lanes area these should also be considered along with adjacent habitats that encourage bat roosting and foraging and birdlife.

A development of 30 dwellings as per Policy DS3 would have fewer buildings to set out on plan and this would enable the building plots to be located sympathetically to the areas know to be inhabited by protected species.

It also includes the following note that should also be considered by the Inspector.

“Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys

Validity of ecological reports and surveys can become compromised overtime due to being out-of-date. CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing (CIEEM, 2017) states, if the age of data is between 12-18 months, “the report authors should highlight whether they consider it likely to be necessary to update surveys”. If the age of the data is between 18 months to 3 years an updated survey and report will be required and anything more than 3 years old “The report is unlikely to still be valid and most, if not all, of the surveys are likely to need to be updated”.

This then leads to a further question and a potential technicality; the original application was supported by various environmental statement reports which rely on field survey data. Given the time that has elapsed between these surveys being carried out and the date that the planning application and now this appeal are being considered are the surveys out of date. If so, should they have been



resurveyed to assess the findings on ecology, Bats, Newts, Badgers and other species as these could have changed significantly in the intervening period.

New, more detailed surveys including mapping of habitats, burrows, setts and other areas occupied by wildlife together with the routes they use would be valuable in determining the most appropriate 30 dwelling development layout.

I appreciate you sparing your time to review my comments on this appeal and look forward to reading your decision in due course.

Yours Faithfully

[Redacted Signature]

ARA Planning Officer