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10 January 2024

**RE: OBJECTIONS to planning application reference 23/01451/FUL seeking to amend approved planning application 21/00701/FUL dated 14.02.22 by adding an additional fourth floor to the partly constructed new building at Friars Garth, The Parade, Epsom, Surrey KT18 5DH**

Dear Mr Turvey,

As an immediate neighbour of the Friars Garth estate, I write to object to this application by Weldin Builders Ltd.

#### Background

There were good reasons to refuse the planning application 21/00701/FUL when it came before the Planning Committee meeting on 13 January 2022, with 5 councillors voting against and 6 councillors in favour. Two of the five areas identified in the debate where the proposed application breached the Council's Development Management policies were housing density (DM11) and lack of amenity space (DM12). It was the concerns over housing density in particular (103.4 dpha, well in excess of policy ratio of 40 dpha) that had resulted in the application being referred to the Planning Committee. Shortly after planning permission had been granted, the applicant, Latchmere Properties Ltd, sold the Friars Garth estate to Weldin Builders Ltd., the current applicant.

Latchmere Properties had made an earlier application in 2020 (20/01229/FUL) to construct a larger four-storey building which, following strong objections concerning the detrimental impact such a large building would have on the neighbourhood, was withdrawn.

## Reasons for objections to latest proposals

**Density of occupation.** As mentioned above, the high density of the approved block of nine flats was already flagged up as an issue of concern at the Planning Committee meeting on 13 January 2022. Latchmere Properties, the applicant at the time, acknowledged this high density occupation in the planning statement (see paras 6.4, 7.17, 7.19, 7.20, 8.30 & 8.52) but considered it justified. To add a fourth storey and three additional flats would make an already unsatisfactory situation worse.

**Lack of amenity space.** As mentioned above, the insufficient lack of amenity space for the approved block of nine flats was already flagged up as an issue of concern at the Planning Committee meeting on 13 January 2022. To add a fourth storey and three additional flats would make an already unsatisfactory situation worse.

**Overshadowing, overlooking and loss of privacy.** The planning officer's report (paras 9.40, 9.41) prepared for the Planning Committee meeting of 13 January 2022 acknowledged that there would be "some overshadowing to No.7 The Cressinghams" and that the proposed balconies would be at an oblique angle to Nos. 7-9 The Cressinghams. To add a fourth storey and three additional flats - with a further balcony four floors high at the rear- would make an already unsatisfactory situation worse.

**Blocking of light.** Adding a fourth storey will result in increased blocking of light to houses on The Cressinghams estate and beyond; it will also result in additional electric light pollution at night.

**Traffic congestion, parking, additional risks for pedestrians.** It is already the case that, whilst nine parking bays are to be provided (one for each flat), this may not prove sufficient allocation, given the planned level of occupation. It is a cause of serious concern that there is no further parking provision for the proposed additional three flats; and it is notable that there is no mention of this important issue in the *Design and Access Statement* submitted by the applicant. Additional residents' cars as well as visitors to the flats arriving by car will thus resort to parking along The Parade, a small, narrow cul-de-sac where parking space is already extremely limited and restricted, and where the pavements for pedestrians are inadequate. The Parade is already an extremely busy road and is at its narrowest at Friars Garth where the pavement on the south side disappears. Additional traffic will exacerbate the difficulties already encountered with movement down The Parade by cars and pedestrians, including for the ambulances attending Greenwood Court retirement home and for parents taking their children to and from the Busy Bees nursery.

**Technical considerations.** There may be questions concerning the planned additional loading on the foundations, the increased drainage, and whether there would be sufficient staircase provision for a fourth floor.



## Design and Access Statement submitted by the applicant

It is regrettable that, in an apparent attempt to paint the Friars Garth site in as positive a light as possible, there are several incorrect statements contained in this document, viz:

At 2.0 **Site Context** it is stated that, *“Accessed from a private entrance from the Parade, the building is served by a shared communal area.”* There is no such communal area serving the building, but once the project is completed there should be two small amenity spaces, one at the front and one at the back, which was already identified at the Planning Committee meeting of 13 January 2022 as insufficient space for the number of future residents that were expected to occupy a block of nine - (mainly) two- and three-bedroom- flats.

Then under **Site Analysis**, *“There is a large grass verge on the eastern side which is within the control of the applicant.”* The grass verge referred to is in fact part of the neighbouring The Cressinghams estate and the current applicant, Weldin Builders, has no control over it.

Further, it is stated, *“The proposed scheme would have no impact on the area and neighbouring properties.”* And *“It is not considered that there would be significant impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties.”* However, as mentioned under reasons for objections above, the Council’s Planning Officer’s report for the Planning Meeting of 13 January 2022 acknowledged that the proposed construction of a three-storey block of flats would produce a negative impact in terms of overshadowing of The Cressinghams estate.

At 4.0 under **Character Appraisal**, it is stated, *“The site has a single point of access from the Parade through a boundary which features trees and other planting.”* The only trees and planting now remaining near to the Friars Garth estate belong to The Cressinghams estate. The former splendid, extensive garden of Friars Garth was completely cleared of its many trees, hedges and lawns to make way for the current building site.

## Conclusions

Previous 2020 proposals to construct a four-storey building at Friars Garth were withdrawn, an acknowledgement that this was simply too overbearing and not in harmony with its surroundings. Arguably, then, a precedent was established that a building of this height was just too high for this particular location on The Parade.

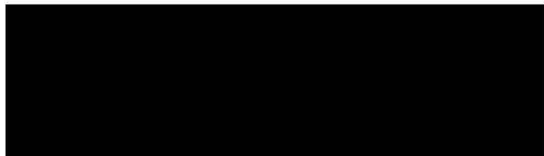
Paragraph 135 of the NPPF emphasises that Local Planning Authorities should ensure that the quality of developments is not “materially diminished between permission and completion, as a result of changes to the permitted scheme”. I submit that, for the reasons highlighted above, to permit a fourth storey to be added would indeed further diminish the quality of the already approved three-storey structure.

The partly constructed new building is already big enough and the upper mansard walls are already in place for a roof to be added to the top, third floor. Once that roof is on, the building will be as tall as (possibly even a little taller than) the neighbouring buildings. The Construction Transport Management Plan submitted by Weldin

Builders refers to completing the project 18 months after commencement of works in 2022; yet it is far from completed with work having ceased in October 2023. If the applicant is not prepared or able to finish the project as approved in January 2022, consideration should be given to handing it over to another builder who can.

For all the reasons mentioned above, I respectfully urge that this application be refused.

Yours sincerely,



Graham Leese

8 The Cressinghams