

ITEMS 4.8 AND 4.9 – 2 WOODLAND WAY, PETTS WOOD, ORPINGTON

REPRESENTATIONS IN OBJECTION TO THE APPLICATION RECEIVED FROM COMMITTEE MEMBER AND WARD MEMBER, COUNCILLOR SIMON FAWTHROP

“Mr Chairman

The applications before us for 2 Woodland Way both fall within the Petts Wood Area of Special Residential Character (ASRC), which was designed and built on the Garden Suburb principle.

Before I commence on a detailed response, I'd like to draw to your attention to some inaccuracies within the report. The first being that reference is made in several places to Policy BE10 when in fact the report means UDP Policy H10.

No reference is made to the existing Petts Wood ASRC description (a copy of which I attach for the minutes) or to the proposed ASRC description outlined in Appendix 10.6 of the proposed Draft Local Plan (a copy of which is also attached) for an understanding of the impact that this proposal would have upon this Special Area).

It is also worth noting that there are two Article 4 Directions in place, one around the front boundary treatment to preserve the low level open feel and a second around the front roof line to preserve the appearance of the area and maintain standards.

The current UDP Appendix 1, paragraph 1.2 (copy attached), makes it quite clear that:-

- (i) new developments will be resisted if they erode the quality and character of the ASRC in respect of the ASRC description;
- (ii) residential density shall accord with that in the area;
- (iii) spatial standards of new developments (plot, width, garden depth and plot ratio, shall accord with the general pattern in the area;
- (iv) backland development will not be permitted; and
- (v) new developments should respect front and rear building lines.

These are just some of the guidelines that this application breaches. There is much more Mr Chairman included in Appendix 1, a litany of failure in respect of these applications.

In noting this report, I refute the comments on pages 62 and 77 where it is stated that “the Council will consider a higher density infill development”; that comment is both misleading to the applicant and a direct contravention of the existing UDP policy as set out in Appendix 1.

The same applies to the description that “the provision of a higher density residential development may be acceptable in principle”. In making any decision tonight I will be asking the Committee to specifically reject, as part of the recommendations, these two misleading statements, in addition to the recommendations contained within the report.

The fact is, that the Petts Wood ASRC is one of only two similar areas in London, the other being Hampstead Garden Suburb, which are of such an important quality that development cannot be a free for all. There are many examples of inspectors looking at the ASRC and recognising its importance. I attach a couple for you, one in relation to an end plot in Ladywood Avenue, which demonstrates that the spatial character is very important. The second is in relation to this plot and the findings of the previous inspector in full. Other inspectors' upholding of the ASRC will also be available as part of this application.

One thing is clear, when the plots were established in Petts Wood, it was for family housing with generous plot sizes and gardens as well as garages. Both of these applications not only over-develop the site but by introducing flatted developments, completely undermine the notion of the Garden Suburb and so severely erode the ASRC as to cause considerable and irreversible harm for current and future occupiers of the site and area.

Finally Mr Chairman, if Members are minded to approve the recommendations in the reports, I'd like to propose some additional recommendations as follows:-

5. There would be a conflict with Policies 3.4 and 3.5 of the London Plan whereby local character and context should be taken into account and whereby great importance is given to protecting back gardens.
6. The Committee do not concur with the findings of the report that the provision of a higher density residential development may be acceptable in principle, particularly given the previous inspector's report on the application at this site, as it erodes the ASRC standards and goes against the Garden Suburb principle which established Petts Wood's character.
7. The Committee do not concur with the findings of the report that the Council will consider a higher density residential infill development as this goes against the standards and character of the ASRC Garden Suburb, which established Petts Wood's as being of low density and high in amenity space, made up of detached and semi-detached properties with generous gardens.
8. The Committee accept that each application is taken on its own merit and dismiss any proposals that present principles or precedents for future planning applications at this site, thereby attempting to constrain any future decision making body."

DESCRIPTION - PETTS WOOD AREA OF SPECIAL RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER

The original plans for Petts Wood date from the late 1920s and early 1930s. While houses were built over a number of years, in a number of similar though varied styles, the road layout and plot sizes were established in an overall pattern. Today the layout remains largely intact. Within the overall area, the Conservation Areas of the Chenies and Chislehurst Road already stand out.

The plots were originally designed on the garden suburb principle by developer Basil Scruby, with large plot sizes spaciouly placed. The characteristics of the Petts Wood ASRC include an open feel, predicated by low boundaries and visible front gardens, set back from the road; there is also spaciousness between the houses which is of superior standard. This allows many of the trees and greenery which prevails throughout the area to be seen from the street scene giving the area its open and semi-rural feel in line with the garden suburb principle. This open and suburban aspect of the area underlines the special characteristic of the area. Development which erodes this principle will be resisted.

The separation between building and the rhythm and pattern of the houses adds to the special character. In many cases there is a much wider separation between houses than in other parts of the Borough which demands a higher degree of separation between buildings to maintain the special character, the openness and feel of the area. Where there are pairs of houses that complement the rhythm of the street scene there is also a prevailing symmetry between the houses. This symmetry can also be seen between neighbouring pairs. The plots are set out in such a way that the spacious character is one of a clear detached and semi-detached nature.

The front building and rear building lines are also of importance in defining the area. The buildings are of a 1930s design which adds to the character of the area. Whilst there have been some changes post war this design aspect of the area remains intact and future development should respect this characteristic. The front roof lines are also of a nature which enhances the characteristic of the area being largely untouched by roof extensions and conversions at the front.

The plot sizes and rear gardens are mostly of a size which is commensurate with the Garden Suburb principle and this characteristic also forms part of the amenity value which makes the area special.

When considering future development within the Petts Wood ASRC, the main focus will be on the impact of any proposed development on the ASRC, taking into account the design and spatial standards including the low density of existing development. Proposals which undermine the character, rhythm, symmetry and spatial standards of the area will be resisted unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. Likewise new dwellings proposed on gardens and infill will also be strongly resisted unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. In this context special is used in the dictionary sense to mean distinguished from others of the same category, because it is in some way superior or held in particular esteem. For a proposal to meet the very special circumstances test in this context would mean not only enhancement to the ASRC but a consequence of not undertaking the proposal would undermine the Petts Wood ASRC or risk some form of harm to the ASRC.