

Planning Inquiry Speech – Richard Harrington

Thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is Richard Harrington, and I am one of the councillors for Benn Ward. I am here today representing residents in the west of the ward. I have supported residents throughout this process by attending meetings, calling the application in to the planning committee, and speaking at those meetings.

Today, I will focus on facilities and highway matters, which support the refusal of this application. I know refusals 3 and 4 have been removed. I have numerous conversations with residents, and it's important to raise this.

I want to begin with the parking data provided by Warwickshire County Council's highways consultant, Project Centre. This data was collected between 11 and 17 September 2023. While this represents only a short snapshot in time, residents indicate that conditions are often worse, and it is the only formal data available; it presents a concerning picture.

The surveys were conducted at 08:30, 14:00, and 21:00. I will focus on the evening figures, when

parking demand is at its highest and residents are most affected.

Sorry for the data overload, but it's necessary to paint a picture of what is going on in this part of the ward:

Dale Street – Total number of spaces: 43. Weekdays – 53%, 40% and 70%. Weekends 70%, 70% and 84%.

Duke Street – Total number of spaces: 10. Weekdays 80%, 70% and 90%. Weekends 90%, 80% and 90%.

Hill Street – Total number of spaces: 11. Weekdays 55%, 55% and 91%. Weekends 82%, 82% and 73%.

King Street: Total number of spaces: 13. Weekdays 54%, 54% and 69%. Weekends 77% 69% and 77%.

Princes Street – Total of spaces 25. Weekdays 60%, 61% 88%. Weekends 72%, 64% 84%.

These figures demonstrate that parking in this area is already operating close to, or at, capacity during peak periods.

The application would result in a reduction of eight parking spaces on Princes Street. Based on the existing evening demand, this would create a shortfall of at least three spaces every evening and for most of

the weekend, before any additional vehicle demand from the development is taken into account.

There is something else to consider. Princes Street is in a parking permit area. Each property is allowed to have 3 permits per house and 1 visitor. So, if each property were to get the maximum of 18 permits, where would they park? With limited capacity in the streets around this domino effect, it just affects residents who already live there.

Parking shortages are critical because they increase the risk of emergency access obstruction, encourage illegal or unsafe parking, and undermine residents' sense of safety and community cohesion.

Turning now to highways more generally, this is a tightly constrained area that already struggles to accommodate current traffic levels. Additional development will exacerbate existing problems, particularly given the wider transport bottlenecks in the area. Access to Newbold Road and Oliver Street is tricky at the best of times, but this will make it worse. With future works to the Avon Mill roundabout due, WCC was not aware of this, and it will skew the data they currently have, and any benefits from highway improvements could be lost with the extra development.

There is also planning permission for approximately 130 flats on Newbold Road, opposite Wood Street. The cumulative impact of this and other developments has not been adequately addressed. This would put extra strain on one of Rugby's biggest bottlenecks, Newbold Road.

A single point of access in and out via Princes Street increases the risk of congestion, additional vehicle emissions from idling traffic, and further parking stress, all of which are detrimental to residents and the local environment. Why was the route through Round Gardens? Where was the compromise when creating the

Finally, I wish to emphasise the impact on the existing community. Over the past two years, residents have worked collaboratively and constructively throughout this process. There remains significant concern about unanswered questions regarding the site, including its long-term land banking, the lack of social housing provision, and the applicant's own acknowledgement at committee that insufficient time had been spent addressing key issues. The company has had the land for years. So, the excuse that they didn't have enough time is not valid.

In summary, I ask that this application be refused on the grounds of highway safety, parking capacity,

residential amenity, and the risk of increased pollution in an area with no supporting infrastructure to accommodate it.

I want to thank the Inspector and officers involved in this application. It has been an honour to represent residents in the west of Benn Ward. Thank you for listening and for considering these matters.