

Natural Environment

There are complaints of minimal effort within the plans to design with the existing natural features and there appears to be no provision of wildflower verges or spaces. There are also concerns that the plans to add trees and a grass verge would block the right of access to the rear of 313-319 High Street which require access for commercial and private use.

Wildlife

It is noted that there is no provision for designing wildlife-friendly buildings displayed e.g. bird and bat boxes, pollinator and insect-friendly structures, connected spaces for hedgehogs. Nor is there any evidence of lighting designed to have minimal impact on wildlife.

There are also concerns around the proposed removal of existing hedgerow around the carpark which is claimed to be vital for local wildlife. Positive comments received regarding the pond enclosure being retained.

Design

It is felt that the design of the dwellings are out of keeping with the area which is made up of conventional 2 storey houses, and there are concerns that the 3 storey dwellings' proximity to the Conservation Area will change the character of the area which many have fought to preserve. It is claimed that the development will negatively impact many local residents' amenity by compressing properties into an already crowded residential area, changing the visual aspect of a historical town.

Daylight/Sunlight

There are concerns that the height of the buildings and their proximity to current homes will result in loss of sunlight for properties and gardens as well as overshadowing.

Overlooking

There are concerns around the proposed buildings overlooking properties specifically into their windows compromising residents' privacy.

Parking

There are concerns that the plans do not include an adequate number of parking spaces, which would result in parking issues on adjacent residential roads. There are questions around where the excess vehicles and visitors will park. It is also noted that the proposed parking spaces have been reduced from the normal 16 sqm to 11.5 sqm.

There are particular concerns around the proposal for a pedestrian access to the new development through Homefield Close which is believed will encourage parking on Homefield Close which is already at capacity due to residents and shoppers parking on the road. Yellow lines are suggested on at least one side of the road at Homefield to ensure local residents can access their driveways and use pavements.

Traffic

Traffic is noted as a current concern in the area, of which this development (during and after construction) will worsen, impacting the safety of road users and pedestrians. There are also concerns around the narrow access road to the proposed residential site from the High Street which is believed will cause serious congestion and associated air pollution.

Construction

It is noted that the recent construction works at the civic centre have caused disruption to local residents such as noise pollution, litter and associated vehicles blocking access to Homefield Close. It is suggested that future construction traffic is not routed through Homefield Close, and that contractors are allocated parking on the construction site or in council car parks.

Other

It is noted that a 200 year old brick wall between a property on Buttercross Lane and the site is party wall owned between the adjacent property owner and the Council. It is claimed that the Council have always maintained their side but there is no recognition of this responsibility in the application.

Green Infrastructure Strategy

It is felt that the plans fail to meet standards set out in the GI Strategy, e.g. "The built environment can be enhanced by features such as green roofs, street trees, proximity to woodland, public gardens and recreational and open spaces. More broadly, green infrastructure exists within a wider landscape context and can reinforce and enhance local landscape character, contributing to a sense of place and natural beauty", "The Council's planning policy approach supported by this Strategy recognises the role of high quality design to bring open space to life and makes it a requirement of development proposals", and "The aim of the Council is to manage the potential impact of development on GI with the strategic objective, working in partnership with other groups, of maintaining and where possible enhancing the ecological, recreational and conservation role of GI within a wider context".

EFDC Local Plan

It is felt that the plans fail to meet standards set out in the Local Plan (Submission Version), e.g. "Planning policy, will require planning applicants to take a collaborative, cohesive, coherent, integrated and proactive approach to the provision of GI."

Sustainability Guidance

It is felt that the plans fail to meet standards set out in EFDC's Sustainability Guidance e.g. "Proposals must be landscape-led from the start, as set out in the EFDC Green Infrastructure Strategy". The plans do not achieve the Sustainability Guidance's Vision and Objectives "To embed a landscape led approach to the design of new Green Infrastructure as part of new development to secure the delivery of high quality spaces".

Council Scheme

There are questions around the validity of EFDC officers and Councillors with regards to making a planning decision where the applicants are owned by EFDC themselves.