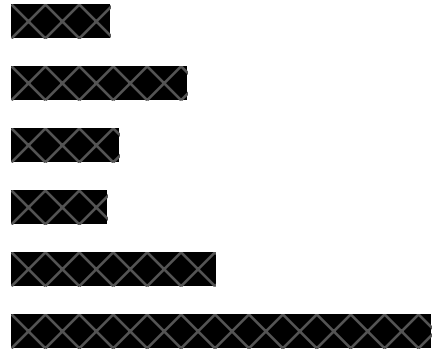




WESTCOTT VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

Mr James Leaver



Planning Department
Mole Valley District Council
Pippbrook
Dorking
Surrey, RH4 1SJ

2 October 2024

Dear Sirs

MO/2024/1228 Land at Milton Court Lane, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 3GA

Outline application with all matters reserved except for means of access for a residential development of up to 86 dwellings including public open space, landscaping, surface water drainage, earthworks and all other associated infrastructure.

We refer to the application above and write in our capacity as a consultee in relation to planning matters on behalf Westcott Village Association (WVA).

You may be aware that the WVA occasionally makes representations on behalf of the Westcott community.

We confirm that we have participated in the MVDC Reg 18 and Reg 19 consultations for this site which, although still green belt and requiring a very special circumstances argument, we accept is likely to be allocated in the 2020-2039 Local Plan later this month.

We participated in the applicant's own consultation earlier this year which included the following concerns in relation to their proposals in the green belt:-

1. WVA did not support the provision of only 40% affordable homes. We believed the regular policy position in CS4 was insufficient provision for a Green Belt site that is not allocated for development in the current Local Plan. The recently consented development at Sondes Place Farm will provide 50% affordable homes and this was a key component in the Inspector's decision in consideration of the very special circumstances and planning balance.
2. WVA could not support "the minimum 10% biodiversity net gain elements of the proposal". We felt Thakeham's proposal should be more ambitious and in line with the emerging Local Plan.
3. The draft site layout provided insufficient detail to alleviate our concerns about
 - a. the impact of this potential scheme on the AONB and Ranmore
 - b. adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt between the settlements of Dorking and Westcott
 - c. the impact that vehicle movements associated with 86 additional dwellings will have on the A25 Westcott Road and Dorking road network which already operates over capacity
 - d. we shared concern for the safety of cyclists and pedestrians using National Cycle Route 22/ Bridleway 110 which shares the proposed vehicular access to the site over Milton Court Lane.
 - e. The separate proposed access for pedestrians and cycles over Nutcombe Lane failed to acknowledge that this was a private lane and does not therefore connect with a public right of way.

We also raised these concerns with MVDC at the same time.

Turning to the application it is disappointing to see that many of these concerns have not been addressed and we therefore wish to object to this application on the following grounds:-

1. The only available access to the application site is from the A25 Westcott Road over Milton Court Lane. This is currently a farm track which is also the principal access to the Thomas Broom & Sons farm, its buildings and silage clamp (MO/2021/0170). It is also the access to Hanover Court, NCR 22 and

Bridleway 110. This is a danger to all users because it also introduces **all** vehicle, cycle and pedestrian movements for 86 new dwellings with 138+ car parking spaces to the existing route.

2. The site access design drawing at Figure 2.6 on page 12 of the Ridge Travel Plan fails to provide us with sufficient comfort that a safe and adequate solution for all users is deliverable. It shows an access road that tapers from 5m to 3.7m and a single footpath 1.9m to 2m wide. It is severely compromised. Once on site it becomes a 5m estate road with a 2m path on each side. We believe Surrey County Highways still need to comment on the detail of this access proposal.
3. WVA have raised concerns on many occasions that the A25 Westcott Road is already heavily congested and Surrey County Council's Strategic Highway Assessment Report – October 2021 states at paragraph 4.1.7:-

“The level of service of the A25 / Vincent Lane junction in the Do Something scenario deteriorates to F during the AM peak and is likely to require some form of mitigation measure in terms of highway layout. However, the need to limit travel by private vehicle should not be overlooked as this has the potential to minimise congestion in this location. The allocation sites at Milton Court Lane and Sondes Place Farm are relatively close to the town centre amenities and its public transport links. High quality pedestrian and cycle links linking these sites to the town centre and railways stations would provide minimise [typographical error in report noted] the need for travel by private car”.

No improvements have been delivered to this junction since 2021 and it is well known that there is no identified solution to do so. It therefore highlights the added importance of delivering high quality pedestrian and cycle links to the town centre and public transport links. This is even more important now that Sondes Place Farm has consent for 144 dwellings and a school access and drop-off.

4. In Modification 32 for the 2020-2039 Local Plan the Inspector has recognised the same issue and has added a fifth criterion to Policy INF1 which reads *“The Council will work with Surrey County Council to produce a Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, which will identify and deliver an increase in the extent of the walking and cycling network, plug gaps in the networks and/or integrate new development into the networks”.*
5. WVA is concerned that the Milton Court Lane access, which is in the southwest corner of the application site, is the furthest point from Dorking and the most tortuous route for sustainable cycling and walking from within the scheme to access the town centre amenities and its public transport links. Nor does it *“plug gaps in the networks and/or integrate new development into the*

networks". A better solution needs to be identified for this application scheme to "*minimise the need for travel by private car*".

6. The reference at paragraph 2.82 and Figure 2.7 of the Ridge Travel Plan to a proposed (described as potential elsewhere in the application) pedestrian and cycle access via Nutcombe Lane is not a connection to a publicly maintained right of way or highway, does not plug a gap and is not available anyway.
7. We have highlighted to MVDC the fact that it owns land to the east of the application site. With further investigation using its property team, negotiation with tenants or third-party landowners – or even using its CPO powers – there is potential to deliver much improved access for this scheme and communities beyond to the town centre via Curtis Road, even if this is just for a cycle and/ or footpath route that links up NCR 22 as well.

We urge MVDC and SCC to object to this application as a safe and satisfactory access design solution has not been presented.

Yours sincerely,



James Leaver, Planning Lead

Westcott Village Association

CC Cllrs Abhiram Magesh, Leah Mursaleen-Plank, Chris Budleigh, Hazel Watson and Margaret Cooksey