

Statement by Mr Jonathan Davies of 29 Skitts Hill, Braintree

App. No. 19/02325/FUL - 31 Skitts Hill, Braintree

The report before you has omitted a significant number of our objections including those based on statutory requirements which would give the authority every reason to reject these plans. For example the required provisions for people with a disability in the NPPF are missing as well as the protection to the building 600mm out. Both statutory requirements, both missing from the plans and both reasons on their own to reject this application.

The report relies on an assumption that because Essex County Council Highways did not comment on the safety of the proposed driveway that they have no concerns. The reason why the County Council did not comment on the safety aspects was because they did not undertake a site visit and they advised me that they had undertaken a 'map review' and this did not include any considerations about safety. As I'm sure you know, in English law silence can never be taken as agreement. The Highways Authority made no comment because it is not in a position to do so.

The report also fails to mention, or even take into account, the traffic speeds and flows on Skitts Hill evidenced by our traffic survey and that anyone exiting the proposed driveway will have one second or less to make a decision to move before a vehicle travelling at 30mph is upon them. We have lived on Skitts Hill for 27 years and have seen many accidents, ourselves included, for people trying to exit their driveway and it is that 27 years of experience which we ask Members to take into account rather than the assumptions provided in the report. If driving out forwards, the wheels of any vehicle exiting the proposed driveway will be half way across the nearside part of the road before a decision can be made to continue and even further out when reversing directly into oncoming vehicles. This is because the views of the road prior to this point are blocked by two fences, a telegraph pole, the curvature/incline of the road and any car parked in front of 31 Skitts Hill.

The assertion that because other properties have off street parking it is safe for the proposed driveway to be created is alarmingly simplistic, since it does not take into account the specific visibility splays for the driveway, one of which on the plans is directly through a fence. The fence is 1.5 metres high, well above the allowed limits for visibility splays. It is also alarmingly simplistic to assert that because there are terraced houses to the south of the proposed dwelling that the plans indicate a harmonious and acceptable streetscape. The terraced houses to the south are built of Victorian dark soft red brick and no render with slate roofing and are also a lot wider than the proposed dwelling.

The plans show a building higher than the terraced houses with matching wavy fronted light coloured hard bricks to the lower half, from a 1950s pattern, and render to the top and so the proposed dwelling is completely different to the terraced houses next to it making a disruptive street scene. The proposed dwelling will be a one off since there will be no others like it in Skitts Hill, or the local environs, and so it does not fit in to the streetscape. Nowhere else in Skitts Hill is there a development of even remotely the same style or finish. Other properties are all purpose built

bungalows, semi-detached or terraced houses. The terraced houses to the south are the same as the proposed dwelling in the same way that a Model T Ford is the same as a Formula 1 car, after all they are both cars. There is no comparison there and there is no comparison with these plans, this application and the existing properties to the south.

The report contains justifications which are from 'informative notes' in the NPPF which are neither policy or recommendations (reduction of car parking spaces) which therefore cannot be relied on as policy or recommendations to approve this application. They are by definition for information and in this case for inclusion in later versions of the policy, and the enacted policy elements of the NPPF should be adhered to. The NPPF policy statement clearly says that 'reducing parking spaces at the point of origin does not contribute to the use of sustainable transport and therefore two parking spaces as a minimum are required per property'. There is no following statement to say that they can be reduced if sustainable transport is available.

The statement 'recommend approval of this application to provide a much needed 2-bed house' seeks to indicate that there is an actual demand for this proposed property when in fact there is nothing to substantiate this statement anywhere in the report, no evidence, no local survey of housing needs, no supply and demand information about two bedroom houses, nothing. In fact there are currently 93 two bedroom houses for sale in Braintree (source Rightmove 31st May 2020) so approval of this dwelling will simply add to an existing glut of two bedroom properties. In addition the NPPF is clear that all such developments in gardens and windfall sites should be resisted unless there is a clear benefit for them to go ahead, the report, the facts, the application and the plans provide absolutely no such clear benefit.

The supporting statements in the report lack substance. The inclusion, for example, of the 'socio economic benefit of an additional 2-bed house' followed by the admission that any such benefit will be minimal, leads to the conclusion that there is no real benefit of this property being built. Similarly the employment opportunities mentioned, offered by a single two bedroom property are so low as to not be of any consequence. There is a reference to the multiplier to be used to determine housing requirements in the absence of an adopted local plan and the inference is that this supports the recommendation to approve these plans however calculations from this multiplier in relation to this proposed property are missing. It is just a statement that such a multiplier exists and in no way justifies the approval of the plans for a house, which under the current and draft local plans, is just not needed.

There are too many of our objections and statutory requirements in our many pages of submissions, missing and points not evidenced or substantiated for it to be reasonable to ask Members to approve these plans. This could lead Members to make a decision which runs counter to the NPPF, planning law and indeed breaks many policy requirements in favour of a property which it is patently obvious is most certainly not providing a 'much needed 2-bed house'. There are 93 other properties available which prove this is not the case.