

Cobham Conservation and Heritage Trust

Charity number 282389

PO Box 335

Cobham KT11 9AY

Planning Department
Elmbridge Borough Council

Planning application 2009/1168

Dear Sirs

We wish to object to this planning application on a number of grounds and recognise that it is essentially the same scheme which received outline planning consent a number of years ago when times were very different. That earlier consent has now expired.

Accuracy

- The application states that all the property is under the ownership of the applicant. We have been informed that a parcel of land designated for parking/turning is owned by “at Home”. This is a material and fundamental error and will give a wholly erroneous picture to those examining the scheme
- The site boundaries of the area to be developed materially mis-state the situation on the 1:1250 plan; all the shops fronting the High Street are not for redevelopment.

Changes since the last consent was given

- The High street area is no longer vibrant. 11 new shops in this cramped area is the last thing Cobham needs to continue to be viable; we already have 8 empty shops – some large double units. This is not just as a result of the recession but the long term decline of the High Street. This has been exacerbated by the Waitrose extension in 2004 and will be further affected by the current Sainsbury’s extension.
- Last time the police were worried that the enclosed precinct would be a haven for crime. The crime situation has generally deteriorated since then particularly amongst youngsters in Cobham. This would worsen the drugs situation
- Cobham is now far busier with far greater traffic problems than 5 years ago despite the highly selective traffic report which makes comparisons not on a like for like basis. It is busier because the widening of the M25 has brought more traffic into the area, Satnavs direct vehicles through Cobham when there are problems on the Motorway and as a result Church Street and the High Street are infinitely more congested.
- Lorries delivering goods are now much larger than five years ago as is evidenced on any day of the week in Church Street or the High Street
- Public opinion is significantly against this development. Previously a number of local shops supported the development. Now a number have objected particularly those nearby; indeed at least one of whom supported

it last time. Many have sited that this development will injure their trade as indeed it will. One, Costa Coffee, is allegedly reviewing its own refurbishment plans in the light of this application. Previously the Cobham and Downside Residents Association did not object nor did the predecessor of this Trust this time both are objecting.

Other reasons for objecting

- It is impossible for any vehicle larger than a family sized vehicle to exit the driveway on to Church Street safely in a forward gear because the road is so narrow with cars parked down one side. Indeed the width of the road available is little more than 2 metres.
- There is no room for vehicles to manoeuvre on site. A full traffic survey should be submitted showing graphically how vehicles with different turning circles will manoeuvre on site.
- If a vehicle enters the site and one comes up the ramp to exit, the first will have to reverse into Church Street – a dangerous manoeuvre.
- It is unrealistic to expect no delivery vehicles to try and deliver via Church Street and it will cause inordinate delays as they reverse out into Church Street.
- It is unrealistic to expect large lorries to service 11 units via trollies from the High Street without massive delays with each delivery; the side of the road is for parking for shoppers
- The scheme is likely to have sustainable viability and overall could damage the retail offering of that part of Cobham as it has done in other locations such as Dorking (St Martins Walk).
- The scheme and its mass are out of size for this corner of the Conservation Area. It is not suitable for shops and heavy vehicles both during and after construction and could damage the historic houses in Church Street which front on to the pavement and have been built without foundations.
- The construction of the basement could alter the water table which could damage some of the historic properties nearby built without foundations.
- The drive way width of the development at around 3.5 metres is as narrow if not narrower than that of a private house and less than the width recommended by the Fire Service for Access. This poses a major Health and Safety issue for a development of this size.

We hope you will take these points into account as the scheme will be out of place, damaging to the vitality of Cobham and damaging to the conservation environment of Church Street and its historic buildings. It would be against your existing guidelines and those proposed in your new Core Strategy. It is not necessary and will degrade the whole area comprising this retail corner of Cobham creating major problems for the future. We hope our comments will encourage you to dismiss this application. The precedent of five years ago is in our view now wholly irrelevant.

Yours faithfully

G Acher
Chairman