

Eastfield House planning – comments to Whitchurch Parish Council meeting, Thursday 14th November 2024

Comments by Neil Huntington:

So here we are again!

The Section 73 application was unanimously rejected by the Parish Council only 9 weeks ago, so what has changed? As far as we can establish, the changes are limited to an amendment to the gable end, a small glass screen and minor planting around a podium and the repositioning of the plant room facing on to the rear of our house, at low level.

Firstly, dealing with the gable end. The Parish Council will be aware that the original hipped gable end was agreed back in 2013 after extensive and time-consuming deliberations. It brought together the views of the planning inspectors, the SODC planning team and the previous owners. Everyone agreed and accepted that the gable end wall should be 6m high and then be hipped from east to west. We did not like this decision, but had to accept it.

This important agreement remained unchallenged for 11 years until the new party acquired Eastfield House in December 2022. In the very recent Section 73 application the hipped end was removed and the flank wall increased to 10m. Controversially this is now nearing completion.

The amended application now proposes that the flank wall will be 8m high before a minor hipped roof is introduced. This is a 33% increase on the long established 6m high flank wall. The applicants' advisors keep quoting that it is 90 degrees from here, or there, or where ever. Unfortunately, we are not in a position to challenge any of this rationale, but what we can say is an 8m high, and 13m wide development would dwarf the rear our house.

This morning, I sent Parish Councillors pictures of the rogue gable end nearing completion. Two of the pictures were taken from our property and one from Little Eastfield (*below*). All clearly show the

enormous scale of the development in very close proximity to what are standard sized residential properties.



It is clear to us that even with the reduced height and the half hip introduced, it would still be out of scale and very unneighbourly. Indeed, the majority of our neighbours believe the already approved scheme will be an overdevelopment of a relatively confined site and therefore even the smallest increase in size, should be unacceptable. The effect is incremental and cumulative.

SODCs planning policy states development must not have a harmful effect on neighbouring properties in terms of overshadowing, or have an over bearing impact, or be oppressive. This enormous flank wall is very visible from ALL the rear rooms in our house and both our garden and that of our neighbours in Little Eastfield. It clearly has a negative effect on our amenity and no reasonable person can conclude otherwise.

Turning to the plant room. The amended plans now show the plant room in a lower ground floor position facing directly on to our

property. We are clearly concerned about noise and fumes. The applicant has a duty to demonstrate that they have sought to minimise the effect the plant room will have on neighbouring properties. Clearly they have not done so.

The applicant states that many of the changes they have requested are due to changes in Care Quality Commission regulations, but this should not be considered a reason to over ride long established planning policies.

I do not believe any of the other issues raised by the 38 objectors have been addressed in the amended scheme, nor many of the comments raised by neighbours who attended the Parish Council meeting in September.

We would therefore ask the Parish Council to reject the amendments to the Section 73 application.

Thank you.

Comments by Julie Huntington:

As many of you know, I am Julie Huntington and I live with my husband, Neil, next door to Eastfield House. I would like to share with the council the emotional impact of this development.

It has taken 14 years and 17 applications, to get to this point. In all this time, our response has been calm and rule-abiding. We have addressed meetings like this, prepared and delivered leaflets, written objections, following the rules of the planning process ...many times.

As the immediate neighbour, we have also spent years trying to remove intruders from the site, including at night, being worried that the house would be set on fire. We received very limited assistance from the then owners.

The development has been recognised as unneighbourly, but we made peace with the consented plans. Even so, I don't think we were prepared for this last 12 months of noise, traffic, littering and damage

to the verges and road surface. Nails in tyres; damage to a neighbour's water meter. You will be aware that Neil was pushed out of the site office recently and told to get off the F***ing site.

It's hard to describe how disappointed and let down we felt in August when we realized that the builders were knowingly not sticking to what had been consented.

The scale of the building and the number of applications and the refusal to accept what has been lawfully consented makes us feel like the victims of bullying by a large corporation. Most of the closest neighbours are elderly and all of us feel ground down by this drawn-out process. Some are too frail to be here tonight and may not have the energy to comment one more time on this latest application. None of the neighbours have the luxury of being able to appoint expensive consultants to protect our interests. Undoubtedly there is considerable, wide-spread unhappiness that the planning process is not working fairly in this case.

We can now see this monolith from every window at the back of our house, as I sit at my desk, as I wash dishes, as I brush my teeth....

However, we do feel lucky that we have always been given overwhelming support in our objections from the local community, the parish council and SODC. And we do hope this support will continue. Thank you.