

## RL7: 16/00744/FULD – Public Consultation Meeting Notes

A public consultation event was held by Ressance in connection with planning application 16/00744/FULD. The event took place at the W.I Hall, Curridge on Wednesday 26 May 2016 from 6.30pm. In total 35 residents of Curridge/interested persons attended the event.

On the 5 May 2016 a letter (see appendix 1) was sent to members of the Curridge community who had previously been notified of the application by the LPA, along with anyone who had left a comment on the Council's Planning Portal where the address was visible.

At the event copies of application plans were mounted on the walls and printed copies of the application documents were also made available. A short presentation was prepared for the audience (slides under appendix 2), however the audience preferred to use the opportunity as a questions and answers session. The event lasted until all questions had been addressed, in total approximately 2.5 hours.

The event provided valuable insight into local opinion of the proposal, and the priorities and preferences of the local community.

A summary of the questions and answers are below:

Q. What will the final design look like?

*A. The design has not yet been finalised as we are still receiving feedback from the Council, however the plans of how Ressance envisages the scheme are displayed on the walls.*

Q. Does Ressance own the land?

*A. No, there is an option agreement in place with the land owner.*

Q. Isn't the proposal against planning policy?

*A. Planning policy is a matter of interpretation. In Ressance's opinion the proposal complies with Nation and Local planning policy, however the LPA might form a different view. The main local policies that are relevant are; ADPP1, which calls for most development to take place adjacent to settlement boundaries or alternatively development in the countryside on a controlled basis, and CS10 which aims to strengthen the rural economy and make provision for rural small and medium size businesses.*

Q. Isn't it true that someone who works in your company owns the land?

*A. No.*

Q. Where is the governance? How will the [business] use be controlled?

*A. Control can be achieved by the Local Authority through the use of a planning condition and/or a S106 agreement (under the Town and Country Planning Act). In a practical sense governance will also result from the imposition of Business Rates and vigilance by the local community who would be at liberty to report any violation to West Berkshire Council.*

Q. Ressance put in a similar scheme at The Traveller's Friend which was refused.

*A. Yes, the LPA and the Planning Inspector refused the application because they did not agree with the proposal. The determination of the application and appeal provided helpful feedback which Resnace has taken into consideration in the current proposal.*

**Q. Why have the garages been removed?**

*A. West Berkshire Highways Department does not recognise the value of garages for parking. The garages have been removed to create space for open car parking, rather than leaving the garages and creating additional hard landscaping which would damage the appearance of the proposal.*

**Q. Have the garages not just been removed to save the company money during construction?**

*A. No, garages would create development value for the properties. It would have been the company's preference to retain them, but we are unwilling to do so at the cost of good design.*

**Q. We have just received a letter from WBC saying that the plans have change.**

*A. The Council is referring to the plans which show the removal of the garages. The updated plans are the ones shown on the walls this evening.*

**Q. Will the development result in 28 cars?**

*A. No, the proposal scheme includes car parking for up to 20 cars (4 per unit). In our opinion is unlikely that this many cars will not be required in reality, but the spaces must be supplied in order to comply with West Berkshire Council's emerging car parking requirements.*

**Q. Can the work area be rented out separately to the live element?**

*A. No, the two elements are inseparable. The live and work uses will be both physically and legally tied.*

**Q. Are there restriction of the businesses that can run from them?**

*A. Yes, this would be controlled through a planning condition as part of a planning permission and could be further controlled in a S106 agreement. We envisage that use of the work space will be small office or R&D (e.g. software development) or clean light industry (e.g. crafts such as pottery).*

**Q. What will the design be like? They don't look like the bungalows.**

*A. The proposal scheme has been design specifically to create a highly sustainable development that we expect will exceed the Council's requirements. The large glass windows are to make efficient use of natural light and heat which will reduce the use of artificial lighting and heating. Other elements of the design will draw from the surrounding buildings and incorporate sustainable modern materials, including areas of green roof, solar panels and heat pumps. The live/work units will be part single storey and part two storeys.*

**Q. What is the demand for the development?**

*A. The demand is outlined in the West Berkshires Core Strategy (Section 3 Shaping West Berkshire - Vision and Objectives and CS10) which seeks to enhance rural economies in West Berkshire. The Council are calling for developments which will enhance and support the rural economy and make provision for small and medium size enterprises and increase working from home, which live/work units are proven to achieve. National Planning Policy NPPF also has the same aim. A comprehensive report has been lodged with the application. Live/work is naturally compatible with villages, live/work developments originated around local employment and cottage industry, and are in synch*

*with modern methods of small “clean” businesses working from space integrated into a dwelling. There is no appropriate small & low cost accommodation available in the locality for small businesses. Occupiers will be people who have made a life choice to integrate family life with their work, as opposed to being commuters (i.e. work-migrators).*

Q. Isn't this just to make money for the developer?

*A. Ressance is a local employer and is ran for profit. The profit margin will not be exceptional, we are small/medium local company. We only pursue developments that we believe will make a positive contribution to local communities. We believe that this is a positive and sustainable development that will help to enhance the medium and long term viability of Curridge and West Berkshire and satisfy the objective of the Coore Strategy..*

Q. Will the Council make money?

*A. The Council will receive a new homes bonus (6 years' worth of council tax from each property) and might receive business rates from the work element under the Government's initiative to allow local authorities to retain business rates. Cllr Hillary Cole was in attendance and helpfully explained her understanding of business rates retention.*

Q. Curridge is an affluent area with a strong rural economy. An estate agent as recently reported that houses prices have risen by 60% in Curridge this year. Why do we need our rural economy enhancing?

*A. Respectfully, as we have not reviewed that statistic we cannot comment in detail, it is however unlikely that it is an accurate portrayal of the true situation. The development will allow people to remain in the village to work rather than out commuting to London (for example). This will retain the economic activity in the local area and help provide a more sustainable environment and community. Live/work will present an opportunity for people in the village who run their business from home to move locally into a purpose built facility, thereby freeing up pure residential homes in the village.*

Q. How much will they sell for?

*A. The final price is not yet set and will depend on the planning permission granted.*

Q. Where will the windows be facing?

*A. As portrayed on the plans; windows are positioned to make maximum use of natural light.*

Q. What will happen to the existing building [2, The Firs]?

*A. 2 The Firs will be retained by the development.*

Q. Will they be in keeping with the existing properties?

*A. Certain elements of the design will be drawn from the surrounding buildings and others will be more modern and sustainable elements, such as large windows and green roofs.*

Q. Who owns the land in the blue line?

*A. It is the same land owner for the blue and red line, namely the owner of 2 The Firs..*

Q. Can land within the blue line be built on?

*A. Anyone can submit a planning application to redevelop land, however should the application be approved Ressance has no intention of submitting a planning application for additional development on the land inside the blue line.*

Q. Was the cutting down of trees a few weeks prior to the planning application being lodged linked to the application?

*A. No. Actually, due to an error in email communications the land owner was not made aware of the application until submission.*

Q. What happens if the business [in the live/work unit] fails?

*A. The outcome would be no different to anyone whose circumstances change.*

Q. Who did you write to about this evenings' event?

*A. We requested the original notification list which the Council used to notify neighbours and also addresses that were available from comments made on the Councils Planning Portal. For ethical reasons Ressance does not purchase address databases.*

Q. Is there a danger of Ressance running out of money during the construction of the development?

*A. No.*

Q. Why can you not build inside of the settlement boundary?

*A. There is no land available.*

Q. The application states that existing trees and planting will provide screening. The trees along the road are deciduous and will not give much screening in winter.

*A. We think that the existing trees, shrubs and plants will provide good screening, which could be improved if necessary. This could be a planning condition.*

#### Ideas put forward by the audience.

Some members of the audience expressed that there is no demonstrable need for live/work units in the village, there is however a need for more housing. Either housing that is affordable for younger occupiers, or housing that will allow current residents to move making their property available for younger occupiers.

For any subsequent public consultation meeting it was suggested that Ressance should advertise the meeting through notices around the village and with a notice on the village website.

#### Other comments made by some attendees:

- Some remained sceptical of the scheme and asserted that the benefits of live/work do not apply to Curridge.
- One attendee voiced his intention to fight the application.
- One attendee does not oppose the design of the buildings actually quite like them, they are just not appropriate here.