

199-203 Henley Road & land to the rear of
205-207 Henley Road, Caversham RG4 6LJ



199 – 207 Henley Road, Caversham

Full Planning Consent Application

April 2019

Statement of Community Involvement

By

Lexington Communications

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1. Introduction

Background

This report has been prepared by Lexington Communications, a specialist communications company, on behalf of Signature Senior Lifestyle ('Signature') who is a provider of high-quality care and accommodation, offering a positive and modern approach to living for people in their later years. This document summaries the consultation that has been undertaken both throughout this site's complex planning history, as well as specifically in relation to the new emerging proposals for the:

Demolition of 199-203 Henley Road and erection of 86 bedroom high quality care home with associated access, vehicle parking, hard and soft landscaping, structural landscaping and site infrastructure.

It is important to add that further to the formal submission of a planning application to Reading Borough Council, Signature will continue to engage with local residents and stakeholders in order to talk them through the proposals, especially in light of the site's complex planning history, and address any questions, queries or concerns they may have.

2. Approach to Community Engagement

2.1 Objectives

Throughout the pre-application phase, Signature sought to work with the local community by:

- Informing site neighbours and other residents living nearby about the proposals as well as local elected representatives;
- Identifying concerns and responding to these, where possible, whether through the design process, providing additional information, or further liaison;
- Understanding local views about the site and the surrounding area to help Signature work with the local community in the post-submission phase.

Whilst the site's planning history, and the Council's response to them has helped shape the proposals, Signature in turn dedicated a considerable amount of time in drawing up their schemes so that they respond where appropriate to both the immediate local area and its wider setting. They also pride themselves in engaging with the local community to understand any concerns they may have and if required make a number of changes to the scheme in direct response to local residents' historic and recent feedback.

3. Consultation programme

3.1 Approach

Signature's consultation approach was to ensure that all stakeholders with an interest in the site's future should have an opportunity to engage with the project team to discuss the proposals in advance of both the submission of a formal planning application and the Council's subsequent 21-day statutory consultation. In particular, we believed it was necessary to reach out to those residents on Ruskin and Henley Road living immediately adjacent to the site.

This approach led to the following activity:

- **Local Resident Door Knock** – On Monday 4th March 2019 an exhaustive door knock of those living on the southern side of Henley Road and properties in Ruskin closest to the proposed development site was conducted. It was conducted from early afternoon to early evening to ensure the best possible response. For both those who answered when we called and who were no in when we called, a letter was given to them introducing Signature Senior Lifestyle, the emerging proposals, the reason for our call and our full contact details should people wish to continue the conversation at a later date.
- **Follow up phone calls and emails** – In the days and weeks following the door knocking exercise on Monday 4th March 2019 the project team responded to a number of phone calls and emails from people living on Henley Road and Ruskin keen to know more about the proposals. Without fail, the project team was able to respond to all questions and queries in full.

4. Community Response

Local Resident Door Knock & Resident Follow Up

Almost without exception, people accepted that the principle of development on this site had been established. Also, again almost without exception, local residents were in stronger support of the proposals for a care home than for the existing planning permission for residential dwellings on this site.

Residents were most welcoming of the fact that a care home would generate significantly less additional traffic to Henley Road, especially at rush hour and school pick up times, than a wholly residential scheme would, and also welcomed the extensive landscaping and planting plan. Moreover, everyone welcomed the plans to bring the built form away from the site boundaries, especially where the site bounds Ruskin, when compared to the existing consent.

Generally, the points raised by local people were:

- Those residents not living directly adjacent to the site are very relaxed about the site coming forward both in principle, and also for a care home specifically. Many openly welcomed it.
- A small number of residents recognised that there was likely to be unmet local demand for a care home in this location.
- Whilst Henley Road was free flowing well for most of the day when residents were door knocked, residents raised limited concerns about traffic. However, almost everyone spoken to recognised that a care home would generate far fewer traffic movements overall, and importantly fewer at peak times, than a wholly residential scheme would. Some also asked for Signature to try and lobby the Council to remove the traffic lights at Ruskin as it was felt to exacerbate the traffic problems at peak times on this stretch of road.
- Those living on Henley Road and who live closest to the development site mostly just wanted something to be built, and were relaxed whether it was for residential uses, or for a care home.

Conclusion

The results of our door knocking exercise reflected the need to engage locally, given the site's extensive planning history. However, whilst the historic applications and residents comments are set out below, we are clear that there is broad and vocal support for a care home in this location both in principle, and in preference to the existing planning consent for a wholly residential scheme on the site.

Historic Submissions to Council Consultations

Having reviewed the site's last planning applications, the comments have been:

Applicant: Henley Road Limited

Application Number: 161842 (2016)

Site Description: 199 Henley Road Caversham Reading RG4 6LJ

Proposals: Demolition of nos 199-203 Henley Road and erection of 60 dwellings at 199-203 Henley Road and to the rear of 205-207 Henley Road with associated access from Henley Road and landscaping

Local Decision: Refused

PINS Decision: Withdrawn

The Officers Report for this application, which again was recommended the application be refused, detailed that eight letters of objection had raised the following comments:

- The proposed units (Nos 42-45) would result in overlooking to Units 32 and 33 Ruskins.
- There is a loss of trees on the boundary with Ruskin and trees within the application site.
- The inclusion of flatted units on the site is out of keeping with the character of the surrounding area.
- Detrimental impact on wildlife within the site.
- Impact on surrounding infrastructure.
- Concern re traffic congestion from increased numbers of homes and impact of proposed new access on traffic flow.
- The existing junction that serves Ruskins was built to a specification that can accommodate an additional number of dwellings than constructed at Ruskins; the proposed new access is not in the interests of highway safety.

On Wednesday 11th January 2017, the Council's Planning Applications Committee voted to refuse the application, following the recommendations set out in the Officers Report. Following an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate, the decision to challenge the Council's decision was withdrawn on 8th March 2018.

Applicant: Henley Road Limited

Application Number: 170959 (2017)

Site Description: 199 Henley Road Caversham Reading RG4 6LJ

Proposals: Demolition of 199-203 Henley Road and erection of 42 dwellings at 199-203 Henley Road and to the rear of 205-207 Henley Road with associated access from Henley Road and landscaping.

Resubmission of 161842

Local Decision: Approved

PINS Decision: N/A

The application, which appears to have been approved without the need for a Planning Applications Committee determination, still received comments from the following residents on the following topics:

David Graves – 27 Erringtons Close, Oadby

“Further to Planning Application Number 170959 my company Infill Land Consultants Limited objects to the development on the grounds all infrastructure is in place for accessing site/land through Ruskin. It was part of the planning for Ruskin to take account of any future development! It would be folly to allow a new access onto Henley Road. All infrastructure at Ruskin was to allow for further development of 150/160 new homes. I have been in dialogue with an agent for use of access road into site from Ruskin but to date no agreement is in place. But is one that could be subject to contract”.

Allan and Christine Webb - 223 Henley Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 6LJ

This year you rejected Planning application 161842 for a number of valid reasons. The latest application appears to us to do very little to change the Status Quo. Apart from reducing the number of dwellings by 18 and moving their positions we can see no valid reason to change your previous decision. The road access has not been altered to reduce the potential accident liability. Peter Evans Partnership Transport Document appears to have ignored the parking bays on the A4155 in the proximity of the entrance to the site. These bays reduce the A 4155 to a two lane highway with insufficient room for a third “entrance lane” . Westerly bound traffic frequently queues from the Allhallows Road traffic lights as far back as the county boundary and beyond. The 12 houses still appear to be planned on flood plane with little or no alterations to alleviate flood conditions on the site. Parking provision is still inadequate and therefore likely to spill out on to the A4155 or the pavement and grass verges outside adjacent properties. The Transport document refers to “The existing pavement and cycle path”. It should be noted that the cycle path on the southern side of the A4155 ends at the Ruskins Traffic Lights. Only the northern side of the road has an easterly bound cycle path. Provision for 74 cycles has been included, all of which will need to exit the site via the Henley Road

Denise and Terry Kimble - 227 Henley Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 6LJ

I would like to oppose the development for the following reasons:

1. *Although the density of the proposed estate has been reduced, this still adds a further seventy cars feeding into the Henley Road. This road is already at a standstill for most of the time between 7.45 and 10am most days. I'm afraid I do not agree with the survey that seems to indicate that only 11 cars will be added to the traffic. With seventy-odd cars, I'm not sure who you think will be living there by certainly more than 11 cars will be exiting during the peak hour.*
2. *It is proposed that the estate flows into Henley Road directly instead of feeding into the estate next door. This has its own exit – with traffic lights – flowing into the main road. The developers can surely not be proposing ANOTHER set of traffic lights? As I sit at the bus stop, I can already see EIGHT set of lights! With a small adjustment to the plans, the exit road can easily be sent through the existing estate, using the same set of lights. And with the same phasing please!*
3. *The new block of flats have balconies facing the road. Please, please stipulate that washing should not be dried on these!*
4. *It's nice to see that twelve houses – with gardens – have been included in the plans. I do hope someone will tell the new homeowners that half of their gardens are part of the flood plain. This area really does flood more than once every 100 years. Certainly three times in the last thirty years.*
5. *The ecology survey mentions badgers in the area. Has anyone contacted the Badgers Trust to ask if a set is situated on the site? If not, I would urge you to do so.*
6. *The developers propose to remove a large stretch of protected hedgerow. Although overgrown, they are still a valuable asset. Please ensure these are native and mixed species [in a replacement hedge].*
7. *I'm concerned how the ponds are going to be emptied. Yes, any life can go into the stream but timing is everything with this.*
8. *I could not find in the plans how surface water is to be dealt with. It should not be directed into the Berry Brook. I understand some of the surface water from the Amersham Road estate ends up there.*

I hope these plans will be rejected.

J Kennedy C Harpham – 32 Ruskin

The plans are an improvement and we are again relieved that no access through Ruskin is featured, a possibility we weren't aware of when purchasing our property. More of the natural barrier between developments is preserved and the lounge window of the plot 1 house no longer faces ours. Fewer dwellings means less of a traffic issue for Henley Road and the block of flats has a lower profile from Henley Road. However the plot 1 house is now much closer to our property than before, negating the benefit of its changed orientation and, as the rear of our property faces east, introduces the likelihood that sunlight to our house will be blocked and that we may get more noise from this property. Moving the level

of the houses a few metres further up or down the hill, so they are obscured by the trees and do not block the light, would negate these issues.

Nigel and Diane Roberts – 225 Henley Road

We oppose the planned 42 dwellings and feel that very little has changed from last time except the amount of dwellings and we feel there are still far too many. The planned block at the front is not in keeping with the houses along Henley road and unlike the block at Ruskin which is obscured by tall hedges. We feel the access onto Henley Road will have a big impact on the already heavy traffic which is tailed back twice a day at rush hour times. We already struggle to get out onto the road to go to work. We have concerns about the impact of building on a flood plane, and how this will effect our own garden, and the impact on existing wildlife. We feel this area should not be built on and another set of traffic at an already busy junction is just impractical.

Lars and Kerstin Gleie – 216 Henley Road

We feel that besides a slight decrease of the amount of dwellings the adjustments made to this proposed development since the refusal of the application 161842 in 2016 do not sufficiently address the concerns that lead to the refusal in the first place. As already expressed by the large majority of other comments, it's specifically concerning that the access to the development is still proposed to be directly from the A4155 rather than from the neighbouring Ruskin estate that was planned with extension in mind and has already the infrastructure in place to support future developments to channel related traffic onto Henley Road in a controlled manner.

Applicant: Henley Road Limited

Application Number: 180418 (2018)

Site Description: 199 Henley Road Caversham Reading RG4 6LJ

Proposals: Outline application for the demolition of nos 199-203 Henley Road and erection of 42 dwellings at 199-203 Henley Road and to the rear of 205-207 Henley Road with associated access from Henley Road (considering access, appearance, layout and scale).

Local Decision: Pending Decision

PINS Decision: N/A

This application is a resubmission following the previous application, 170959/FUL, which has a resolution to grant that is currently waiting the finalisation of the S106 agreement. This application only differs from the previous one in so far as provision for affordable housing has been removed and a Viability Report is submitted in support of this change. All other principles of the development that were established with the previous application remain unchanged.

Whilst this application has yet to be determined, the public comments that the application has received have been:

Allan and Christine Webb - 223 Henley Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 6LJ

We can see no reason why this application has been submitted other than to avoid the developer's obligation to provide the 30% affordable homes which his previous application 170949 required. The new application still does not explain clearly how the access road will allow a third lane in the A4155 without removing the existing parking bays and possibly the road island. It is also not clear if the pavement on the southern side will be narrowed. The plan of the access road is poorly drawn and would benefit from being drawn clearly and to scale. We continue to oppose the Application on the grounds that the entrance arrangements are unsuitable and unsafe.

Denise and Terry Kimble - 227 Henley Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 6LJ

This letter is in response to the latest request to build dwellings at the above address. Key points – in no particular order:

- 1. In the overview it states 'key social impact is the need to protect the amenity of the occupiers of the neighbouring dwellings. Any significant change in the proposed area will not improve anything for those of us who live near the site. Increased cars, exhaust, users of local schools and transport will make the area worse to live in, not improve it.*
- 2. Not sure what 'planning for positive growth' means. Most of the previously build dwellings were purchased by people, not to live in but to rent out to others. Landlords who wish to make money.*
- 3. The entry into the estate is still shown as going out onto the Henley Road. The developers suggest a 'priority junction site access' or, another set of traffic lights on the Henley Road – only yards from another set at Ruskin Court (sic). Any additional reduction to the traffic flow in this part of Henley Road is not advisable. If the developers think that the additional number of cars entering and exiting the site needs a set of traffic lights then it is clearly affecting the movement of vehicles along this main access road. Why would the additional cars need a priority entry onto the road when the rest of the residents have to wait their turn to access the road and/or houses. You cannot have it both ways – it either affects the road or it doesn't.*
- 4. Why isn't the entrance to the estate not via Ruskin Court? The design of the existing estate will easily take a joining road from, the proposed site and not need a further set of lights.*
- 5. Additional vehicles will exacerbate the already poor quality of the are in this area. CADRA state that there has long been a concern in central Caversham and further tests are being carried out. This poor air is especially a problem for those people living to the south of the road, where stationary cars pump out exhaust which flows down the drives and into the houses and gardens.*

6. *There are not EIGHT buses that service the road, there are three...*
7. *It states that there is to be provision of a large open space to the south of the site to provide additional 'amenity space'. What will this be used for? Bonfires, rubbish tip? Additional car parking? Will it be fenced off? Will it allow access into the Berry Brook?*

Finally, we thought that at a previous Council meeting, the council declared it would not keep allowing these mini estates to be built. The developers will keep putting forward changes to the plans but it surely needs an edict on what will be allowed and what will not be? Reading has vast quantities of development in hand and proposed. They must surely provide enough housing for the town without ruining what is a very pleasant, semi-rural area.

J Kennedy C Harpham – 32 Ruskin

Please note we were not invited to submit comments for this application whereas previously we received notification in writing. If others have also not received a letter it may limit feedback. We haven't been supportive of any of the applications however we are resigned to development as the least worst option and are glad that no access is planned via Ruskin, which would be disruptive to our property in particular. Please note it is Ruskin, not Ruskins, Ruskin Court or any of the other versions I've seen! My main observation is that the removal of a number of trees between the proposed development and Ruskin, approximately where the Ruskin spur points at the development, seems unnecessary and removes a pleasant green area that will serve as a boundary between the developments in terms of building noise, disruption and so on. The tree directly at the bottom of 32 will remain, but a number of trees north of it will go, which I don't recall seeing previously. Can the trees be kept?

5. Consultation Response

Response to public consultation comments

Whilst our dialogue with immediate local residents on the main aspects of Signature Senior Lifestyle's proposals is on-going, they have to date centred around many of the same queries as those living on Henley Road and Ruskin have raised in the past in relation to previous planning applications.

We therefore believe it is important to respond to the general topics raised by residents both historically and in relation to this application, and Signature's responses are outlined below:

Traffic, Access and Parking

Care homes are known to create significantly fewer additional traffic movements than almost any other type of development, and this is especially true when compared to private residential housing, which has been a central aspect of many of the previous applications for this site. Moreover, whilst private housing typically creates additional vehicle movements at morning and evening rush hours, Signature Senior Lifestyle create staff shift patterns, agree servicing delivery schedules and encourage visitors to arrive at times that fall outside of these busy periods. The overall result is that not only is there less additional stress on local roads from a care home in comparison to almost any other form of development, but for Signature schemes, any additional vehicle movements are also focused on time periods where there is likely to be greater capacity on the local road network.

In terms of access and parking, Signature Senior Lifestyle are working closely with the transport consultants and officers at Reading Borough Council to ensure the proposed access point to the site from Henley Road is acceptable, and that the car parking provision is acceptable. Importantly, Signature's experience of their existing care homes show that staff mainly arrive by public transport, cycling, on foot or as part of a car share, meaning that only very limited numbers of car parking spaces are taken up by staff. This in turn allows the car parking provision to be taken up by visitors and other users, ensuring that there will be no additional car parking pressure on the roads around the site.

Flooding

We are aware of the very specific concerns that those living close to Berry Brook have about the risk that the re-development of this land, and land adjacent to it, could result in increased flooding risk. However, have conducted our flooding risk assessment, we are confident that any re-development of this site will actually reduce the level of flooding due to our mitigation proposals.

Landscaping

We recognise that whilst the wider area is semi-rural in nature, the site itself is located close to existing residential homes. We have therefore worked closely with a landscape architect to produce a landscaping masterplan. This masterplan will be submitted to the Council as part of a formal planning application, and seeks to screen any new care home for local residents living to the east and west.

6. Next Steps

To recap, whilst the site's planning history and the Council's response to them has helped shape the proposals, Signature has in turn dedicate a considerable amount of time in drawing up their schemes so that they respond where appropriate to both the immediate local area and its wider setting. They also pride themselves in engaging with the local community to understand any concerns they may have and if required make a number of changes to the scheme in direct response to local residents' historic and recent feedback.

In the case of 199-207 Henley Road, the feedback Signature has received following its door knock of residents in March 2019 has been similar in nature to those that have been highlighted in previous applications and which Signature has addressed through the design of their emerging proposals. Furthermore, their response to each issue has been directly addressed above.

More widely, the door knock, resident letter, hotline, email address and postal address helped create numerous ways that local residents could contact the project team and as expected with an application of this kind, the issues were hyper-local in nature and responded to in a timely manner. Signature will continue this ongoing dialogue with local people during the post-submission phase as well as up to and beyond a planning committee decision.

If you require further information on this report, please contact Michael Stanworth at Lexington Communications:

- Email: michael.stanworth@lexcomm.co.uk
- Telephone: 020 7025 2355
- Post: Michael Stanworth, Head of Property, Lexington Communications, 5th floor, 198 High Holborn, London WC1V 7BD

7. Appendices

Letter to Local Residents



Dear Resident

**Re-development of land between
Henley Road and Berry Brook**

March 2019

Dear Resident,

Sorry We Missed You – Door Canvass Regarding Development Proposals

We called on you today to introduce Signature Senior Lifestyle and talk to you about their emerging proposals for the re-development of land between Henley Road and Berry Brook for a new care home.

Although there was no answer when we knocked on your door, we wanted to talk you through the plans and pass on our full contact details should you wish to discuss them with us. Whilst we believe this is important for every site we acquire, we believe it is especially important in relation to this site given its complex planning history.

Who Are Signature Senior Lifestyle?

Signature is a provider of high-quality care and accommodation, offering a positive and modern approach to living for people in their later years. We currently have 13 care homes that are operational across London and the South East, and they are all registered with the Care Quality Commission as a nursing home. Any new development here would match those of our other facilities – namely a mixture of accommodation types and a range of communal facilities for residents receiving residential, nursing, respite and dementia care.

You can find out more on Signature by visiting our website, at www.signature-care-homes.co.uk.

Why Henley Road?

We believe that there is demand for a Signature care home in the Reading area, and that this location is ideal for such a facility. However, we are aware of the site's planning history and we wanted to contact you at an early stage to introduce ourselves and our emerging proposals and to discuss them with you.

Given the very specific concerns of local residents towards past planning applications, we thought it best to seek to discuss these with you on your doorsteps and in your front rooms rather than holding a stand-alone public consultation event.

Our approach to design starts with the responsibility we have to create something fitting for a sensitive location such as this and which would be of the same high quality as all other Signature Senior Lifestyle homes. This includes carefully considering the relationship the home has with its surroundings.

Signature Senior Lifestyle Developments Ltd Gravener House, Homewood Crescent, Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire HP9 1JJ
T 01494 682672 F 01494 682682 E enquiries@signaturecare.co.uk W www.signature-care-homes.co.uk
Registered at Gravener House, Homewood Crescent, Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire HP9 1JJ Registered in England No. 8842285



Keeping in Touch

Although we missed you on this occasion, we would welcome a discussion with you by email or on the phone to answer any questions you may have. Overall, we believe that were our proposals to progress to an approved planning application, it would make a positive contribution to the local area and deliver a relaxed and caring setting for local residents who require high-quality care facilities.

If you would like to discuss the proposals with us, please contact Michael Stanworth at Lexington Communications by calling 020 7025 2300 or emailing Michael.Stanworth@lexcomm.co.uk.

Yours faithfully,



David Roe
Head of Land and Planning
Signature Senior Lifestyle