



MINUTES of a Meeting of the PLANNING COMMITTEE held at the Village Centre, Ashurst Wood on Thursday, 28th June 2018 at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllrs Forbes (Chair), Bussell, Bright, Loveday, Phillips and Wailes
In attendance: Assistant Clerk, Rebecca Roberts, Cllr Belsey and 12 members of the public

1. **Public questions** – Residents raised questions over surface water after the development, light pollution and what would happen to the mature trees on the site of DM/18/1548. Cllr Forbes said that the developers have submitted a tree and landscape report and that behind the site is an area of ancient woodland which will be protected. Cllr Forbes also stated that drainage conditions are attached to any development and as for the light pollution, there is already a large building on the site. Another resident had concerns about the traffic flow and the density of the proposed development. There are concerns over the traffic flow within the site queuing up to get onto the A22 at peak times. Another concern was the 15m buffer zone around the Ancient Woodland – it is hard to see on the plans and it appears to already have parking areas within it. It was also mentioned that Mr Owen appears to have amazing confidence that this application will go through, no matter what the residents or Village Council say. These are ugly urban buildings.
2. **Apologies for absence** – Cllrs Lindsay, Judge and Samways
apologies were received and **resolved; the reason was accepted.**
3. **To receive Declaration of Interests from Members in respect of any matter on the agenda** - none
4. **The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on the 12th June 2018 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.**
5. **Recorded Meetings:** none
6. **Planning applications:**

DM/18/1548

Location: E D F Energy Wealden House Lewes Road Ashurst Wood West Sussex RH19 3TB

Description: Proposed new build residential development consisting of 71 units following the demolition of all existing site buildings.

The Village Council recommends: **Refusal.**

The site was allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan for residential development. The VC therefore supports the principle of development. However it cannot support this proposal as it does not comply with the Neighbourhood Plan policies.

Members consider that the urban design is unattractive and out of keeping with the character of the Lewes Road area (as described in the Ashurst Wood Character Assessment which forms part of the evidence base to the Neighbourhood Plan).

The proposal does not comply with Policy 9(a), as it does not **reflect and respect the predominant character of the area with particular regard to unit type, scale and massing**; or Policy 9(b), as the layout does **not reflect and respect the spacious character of the locality to help integrate the development into the vicinity**.

Policy 9(h) requires a mix of dwelling types and sizes, the appropriate mix to be informed by a Housing Needs Survey together with information from MSDC's common housing register. This covers the market and affordable housing.

It is accepted that there is a need for small units, particularly Affordable ones, but the application does not address this requirement.

The design does not **respect the scale and character of existing and surrounding buildings with reference to the Character Assessment** - Policy 14(a).

The removal of the existing building provides an opportunity to enhance the site, which this proposal does not achieve. The reference to developments in Cambridge and London as precedents for this scheme is inappropriate, as those developments are in cities which are obviously not comparable to a village located in the High Weald AONB.

The Neighbourhood Plan stresses the importance of gardens in the village. Policy 14(h) requires private garden amenity space. The nearby flats have large communal gardens. While accepting that there will be some residents who will not require gardens, the Village Council wishes to see the inclusion of some private garden spaces and/or balconies to provide a better quality of life for future residents.

Car parking provision does not comply with Policy 21 of the Neighbourhood Plan, which requires two spaces to be allocated for each flat. This should include the Affordable Homes on the site. Ashurst Wood has higher than average car ownership, as demonstrated in the evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan. The Examiner stated that this policy reflects the circumstances found in Ashurst Wood and is well-designed and locally distinctive. It is essential that all parking is contained within the site.

Moreover, Policy 14(i) states that parking should not be **prominent in or dominate the street scene, and the visual impact of parking areas should be minimised wherever possible by the use of alternative surfaces and screening**.

It is therefore necessary for the applicant to design a scheme that has sufficient parking provision without being dominated by hardstanding.

The Village Council is concerned by the plan at page 34 of the Design and Access Statement, which shows a number of blocks of flats on the adjacent site (which is allocated for possible residential development in the Neighbourhood Plan). If the applicant wishes to develop both sites, then the Council would like to see a comprehensive proposal covering the whole combined site.

The proposal includes an ancient woodland buffer zone, however the plans show that a road and car parking spaces will be placed within the zone. It seems unlikely that this would be suitable and the Village Council suggests that this is clarified with the AONB unit and /or Natural England.

The Village Council has concerns about the conclusion in the Transport Statement that there are no traffic or highways issues arising from the proposal because there will be a reduction in traffic generation. The Council would request a site visit from the Highways Authority and consideration as to whether a safety audit is required. The Council shares the concerns of residents that traffic will queue to exit the site onto the A22, particularly at peak times.

Consideration should be given to the use of developer's contributions for highways improvements, including a pedestrian crossing (as there will be more people crossing to access the primary school and village businesses) and cycle lanes.

The Village Council wishes to express its disappointment that it was not consulted about the proposal before the planning application was prepared. The public exhibition on 29th May was not a meaningful consultation as it followed the submission of the planning application and no changes were made to the scheme as a result of feedback received.

The applicant mentions the pre-application consultation **DM/16/2845** several times, saying that the advice given has been incorporated into the scheme. It should be made clear that the proposals that were the subject of this consultation were never published or seen by the Village Council or residents, and therefore this advice does not constitute community consultation.

The applicant's Affordable Housing Statement proposes a 50% rented / 50% intermediate housing split. The Village Council would expect at least 75% of the affordable units to be available for rent, in accordance with DP31. Recent experience in Ashurst Wood shows that there is a high need for affordable homes for rent.

The Village Council agrees that the potential of the site must be realised, but not at the expense of spoiling the character of the surrounding area and the village. The Village Council respectfully requests that this application be refused or, preferably, withdrawn. The applicant should then prepare a new application which meets the criteria set out in the Neighbourhood Plan. This might well mean that the number of dwellings provided is closer to the figure suggested in the Neighbourhood Plan.

7. To receive notification of planning decisions:

8. Correspondence:

9. Any items for reporting or inclusion on future agenda: Application DM/18/2460

Meeting Closed at: 8.19pm

Chairman..... Dated: