

Notes from Information Meeting held Tuesday July 9 11am in Ashurst Wood Village Council offices between three village councillors – Jenny Forbes, Trudy Draper and Bob Spoor, acting council clerk Rebecca Roberts and two land agents from Fairfax Properties – Martin Wilkes and Joe Cheeseman.

Jenny started the meeting to point out that no decisions or binding statements would be made by the village council at this meeting and reminded Fairfax that after a similar meeting before a previous planning application on this site, Fairfax had mistakenly said that the village council approved of the plans. This was not to happen again. Martin agreed.

Fairfax agents produced site plans marked 'for indicative purposes only' showing a layout of a close containing nine (9) houses, a second plan entitled an opportunities and constraints plan which showed views and open land allowing for enhanced landscaping and an ecological buffer, plus a list of the proposed houses – two 2-bed and seven 4-bed properties. Copies were left with the village council.

Martin started the meeting by saying that this was the fourth of fifth plan on this site and Fairfax had had meetings with Mid Sussex District Council and the High Weald landscape team to look at the effects the current plan would have on the High Weald landscape. He said the last plan had included a car park for the school, which had been rejected as too much hard standing and so not appropriate for a site in the AONB.

He then talked about discussions going on at Mid Sussex about new allocated housing sites and was due to report this month but now pushed back to September. If the Dirty Lane site was included then Fairfax would put in an outline planning application for nine houses. No planning application would be put in until the site was included for housing.

We talked about how the village streets struggled to cope with the amount of traffic and Jenny said that the Hammerwood Road by the church became very congested at peak times as two vehicles were unable to pass and Maypole Road was increasingly problematic. These were the two roads that would be used by the new development. Unfortunately the highways department at West Sussex County Council has never supported the view that village streets were a problem.

Trudy asked how this plan got over all the objections to the last plan. No real reply. It seemed Fairfax was hoping the site would be included for housing by Mid Sussex in its current talks.

Trudy was concerned that a gap had been left at the end of the proposed close, which looked like it was the way into more development. Martin replied that it was left for the view. Trudy said that at the public consultation exercise for a previous plan, Fairfax had openly said it had options of more fields so the plan was the first of several. Martin said there were no plans for more development at present.

The housing was only on a small part of the site and Martin said the management of the surrounding land could be run by a management firm or perhaps the village council could take it on but details would be decided at a much later date.

Martin said that if the Dirty Lane site was not allocated for housing by Mid Sussex DC then Fairfax would take legal advice on the question of whether MSDC have a five year supply of housing land. If the legal advice told Fairfax it had no case, then the site would be dropped.

Jenny asked the question about space standards for housing and Martin replied that all standards were met.

The meeting ended at 11.30am