

ALBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO PLANNING APPLICATION DM/17/3784 - SITE OF THE FORMER HAZELDENS NURSERY, LONDON ROAD, ALBOURNE: OUTLINE APPLICATION FOR AN EXTRA CARE DEVELOPMENT OF UP TO 110 UNITS (COMPRISING OF APARTMENTS AND COTTAGES) ALL WITHIN USE CLASS C2; ASSOCIATED COMMUNAL FACILITIES, PROVISION OF VEHICULAR AND CYCLE PARKING, TOGETHER WITH ALL NECESSARY ROADS AND FOOTPATHS; PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE WORKS; AND ANCILLARY WORKS AND STRUCTURES. WORKS TO ALSO INCLUDE THE DEMOLITION OF THE EXISTING BUNGALOW ON THE SITE.

Firstly, Albourne Parish Council would like to comment on the totally unsatisfactory local consultation Retirement Villages Ltd has undertaken. The public consultation referred to in their documentation consisted of a single exhibition in Albourne Village Hall, which was only notified to some residents and the Parish Council on 19th July 2017, that is just 4 days prior to it taking place. This was the first the Parish Council or any residents were made aware of this proposal. Only a sample of the residents was notified - for example the Company did not take the trouble to notify the residents of Spurk Barn, which is one of the dwellings most impacted by this proposal; nor did they contact the Parish Council and send any representative to attend the Parish Council meeting, where this application, and the Council's consultation response to MSDC, was discussed.

The company also claim to have engaged in the Albourne Neighbourhood plan process. This is inaccurate, in that there was no communication from this company during the long development process, and the many consultations into the Neighbourhood Plan. No evidence of any communication, input or objections from them were received. As mentioned, the first the Parish Council knew about this this proposal was on 19th July 2017.

It also doesn't appear that any consultation has taken place with local GP/hospital services, water providers, or other infrastructure bodies to understand the impacts on these services of the proposal, and although an outline application, it does not seem possible for the application to be decided, even in principle, without these basic steps being taken.

In any event, Albourne Parish Council strongly objects to this proposal. Its scale is totally at odds with the size of the Village, which would have the effect of increasing the number of dwellings in the village by around 40 percent. Not only is this increase totally unsustainable, in terms of the impacts on the heritage of Albourne, but the demographics of the village will be totally skewed, with over a third of the population being over 65 (probably more likely, over 75), although the data for this is not available.

We note that the proposal is set out in the application as Class 3 use, not class 2. Although only outline permission is sought, we note from the information available, it appears that many of the units are independent dwellings with their own front doors. Based on the MSDC HEDNA addendum point 2.7, this places them into the Enhanced Sheltered/Extra Care use class C3. This emphasises the point on excessive scale, as it is well in excess of any housing requirements, and needs for the parish of Albourne, even with the increased housing requirement, verbally agreed by the Planning Inspector Jonathon Bore at the July examination hearings into the District Plan.

Indeed, there is no evidence for the need of a development of this scale. The Pinders Care Needs assessment document, submitted by the applicant, states that there are 70 extra Care Units required within the "catchment area" by 2034 and only 15 by 2024, i.e. nothing like the 110 proposed with this application. This "catchment area" inappropriately includes Burgess Hill, a growth area which should be able to accommodate its own elderly population. In that event, if the need from Burgess Hill was removed the need would be significantly less. The MSDC HEDNA addendum document only has an unmet need of 93 Extra Care Units Units for purchase for 2031, and that is across the whole of the district.

If the proposal is genuinely for class 2 accommodation, defined in the HEDNA appendix as care homes or high level of provision usually associated with residential care homes, the location is completely inappropriate and unsustainable. Albourne is reliant on car transport with only a very poor, infrequent, bus service. The nearest

facilities of any kind are at least 1 mile away in Hurstpierpoint or Sayers Common, certainly not walkable by anyone needing a care home or even an extra care type facility.

The additional employment mentioned by the applicant is not required. As highlighted in the Albourne Parish Neighbourhood Plan (APNP), Albourne is well served by employment sites with a number of agricultural buildings being converted to commercial premises over the last years (see section 5.1 of the APNP).

The proposed site is quality grade 2 agricultural land which needs to be protected. There are surface water drainage issues with the site with it becoming very boggy and water flowing across it in wet conditions. There is little accurate information in the application on how this issue, along with the additional surface water issues created by the development, would be handled.

The site lies significantly outside the built up area boundary, in an area of countryside development constraint, and impacts on a number of nearby listed buildings. It is visible from the South Downs National Park, and given the nature of its use it would require significant lighting, thus impacting on the SDNP and the dark skies policies/aims of both the SDNP and APNP. The applicant may point to the lighting at the adjacent Gospel Hall, but this is only used infrequently when the Gospel Hall is in use, not permanent lighting which would be required for this development.

From a wildlife perspective, the Parish Council very much supports the observations that the surveys indicate the site is of ecological importance at the local level, and of local importance for several legally protected species (foraging bats, slow worm, common lizard, grass snake and possibly great crested newt) as well as nesting birds. Whilst the intention seems to be to retain the majority of the boundary hedgerows and mature trees, the proposed development will be sited in close proximity to these, with potential negative impacts, and increased human disturbance (including cats and dogs), which could further reduce the wildlife value. Also, much of the proposed ecological enhancements seem arbitrary e.g. 15 bird boxes and 6 bat boxes to be installed on site. With regards to foraging bats, light pollution is a particular issue and is likely to increase significantly should the development go ahead.

The Mid Sussex District plan is well advanced with the main modifications having been verbally agreed by the Inspector, Jonathon Bore, at the July hearings, and those modifications are in the process of the final consultation process. Therefore policies in this Plan, and the APNP, must carry considerable weight.

In summary, this application is contrary to every relevant policy/aim in the APNP, namely:-

ALC1, ALC2, ALH1

Aim – Conservation area

Aim – Dark skies initiative

Aim – New housing development

...and for this, and for all the above reasons, this application should be refused.