

HENFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT DC/11/1962 BY WELLBECK STRATEGIC LAND LLP FOR OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSION FOR 102 DWELLINGS TOGETHER WITH ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING, OPEN SPACE AND ACCESS ON LAND EAST OF MANOR WAY.

1. INTRODUCTION

Henfield Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the above application. Following careful consideration of the application and consultation with the local community, Henfield Parish Council opposes the application for the reasons set out in this document.

2. METHODOLOGY

Henfield Parish Council (hereinafter referred to as HPC) considered the relevant documents to gather information and formulate a response. In addition, HPC considered the proposal at the following meetings:

- 3rd November 2011 - Plans Advisory Committee
- 15th November 2011 - Special Parish Meeting, attended by over 200 people
- 17th November 2011 - Plans Advisory Committee
- 1st December 2011 - Plans Advisory Committee
- 6th December 2011 - Parish Council Meeting

3. GENERAL GROUNDS FOR OBJECTION TO DEVELOPMENT.

- a) The application site is located outside the built up area boundary for Henfield and under Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy DPD is classified as countryside where development as proposed is deemed unacceptable as it does not meet any of the following criteria:
- Supports the needs of agriculture or forestry;
 - Enables the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste;
 - Provides for quiet informal recreational use;
 - Ensures the sustainable development of rural areas.

Henfield is a rural area. A considerable level of employment and income is generated from agriculture. There has been no proven need shown for further housing requirement.

- b) Planning consent has recently been finalised in respect of Phase 3 of the development at Parsonage Farm Henfield (re: DC/09 /1222). This development provides for 130 new dwellings which are in addition to the existing 180 dwellings which were erected during Phases 1 and 2 of the Parsonage development. The impact of Phase 3 of the Parsonage development on the community cannot therefore yet be ascertained, but is likely to be substantial.

- c) Henfield's infrastructure is such that a further development of this size will put an unacceptable pressure on the existing provisions.

4) SPECIFIC GROUNDS FOR OBJECTION TO DEVELOPMENT

a) TRANSPORT

- i) The impact of additional traffic would be unacceptable. Henfield does not have a bypass and through traffic uses the A281 High Street/London Road. This traffic has over the last few years increased substantially and heavy goods vehicles often cause serious congestion. Additional motor vehicles resulting from the Phase 3 Parsonage Farm development of 130 dwellings will add to this volume of traffic. Reference is made to the 2001 Census (the most recent available) which shows of 2,188 inhabitants in work, over 1,600 of those inhabitants use their cars to travel to work, to shop or to take children to schools outside the immediate area.
- ii) There is no direct access to Henfield by train. The nearest railway station is Hassocks. There is no direct public transport connection to that railway station.
- iii) The Residential Travel Plan submitted with the application gives a false picture of bus services available to Henfield residents (their table 2.2), citing there are 6 services operating along the London Road; namely:
- Route 2. This service covers Shoreham, Hove, Brighton, Woodingdean and Rottingdean. There is a restricted spur service to Steyning; but the nearest this service gets to Henfield is Upper Beeding – 5 miles away.
 - Route 17. This service covers Brighton, Patcham, Pyecombe, Henfield, Partridge Green, Cowfold and Horsham. The service is hourly, Monday to Saturday between 0600 and 20.00 hours ; and 2-hourly on Sunday between 0900 and 1900 hours.
 - Route 100. This service covers Burgess Hill, Sayers Common, Henfield, Upper Beeding, Steyning, Washington, Storrington and Pulborough. The service is hourly, Monday to Saturday between 0700 and 1900 hours.
 - Route 106. This service covers Henfield, Upper Beeding, Steyning, Lancing and Worthing. The service is 2-hourly, Monday to Saturday between 0800 and 1800 hours.
 - Route 922. This is not a regular scheduled service. There is one bus a week at 0950 hours on Thursdays, being a dedicated service to the Tesco store at Broadbridge Heath.
 - Route X3. This is not a regular scheduled service. There is a bus at 1124 hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays, being a dedicated service to the Holmbush shopping centre at Shoreham by Sea.

It is immediately apparent that services 17, 100 and 106 cease to service Henfield early in the evening and provide a very limited Sunday service with the result that many travellers out of Henfield find themselves unable to return to Henfield after 1900 hours or travel outside of the Parish on Sundays and are therefore again thrown on to their own private means of transport rather than public transport.

As a result of recent or pending withdrawal of subsidies by West Sussex County Council, bus service 17 on Sundays, service 100 east of Henfield and service 106 in its entirety are currently at risk of reduction or total withdrawal.

Worthing Hospital is the only hospital with a direct bus link, albeit every two hours and it is now very likely the subsidy for this service will be withdrawn. There is no bus link to any other main hospital.

- iv) This lack of available public transport throws the majority of the residents of Henfield into dependency upon their own motor vehicles for any form of activity outside the village. The expected increase in motor transport by private vehicle therefore is such as to put an unacceptable strain on the A281 and in particular Henfield High Street. The High Street is already subject to severe traffic congestion particularly when deliveries are being made to local shops and also as a result of unauthorised parking. The High Street is effectively a “bottle neck” where there are frequent queues and delays.

Any increase in commuters travelling to and from Henfield will increase the strain upon the road systems within Henfield and the surrounding area. It will add to the traffic congestion particularly during rush hours at the Dyke Road roundabout (junction with A.27 at Brighton) and Cowfold (as commuters travel to Brighton and Horsham).

- v) Off street car parking facilities in the centre of Henfield are already stretched to over capacity. On- street parking is increasing of necessity on estate roads around the main car parks in the village due to unavailability of off road parking spaces. This lack of parking is resulting in residents driving out of Henfield to shop and this is further contributing to congestion on the road systems around Henfield.

b) SCHOOLING

Henfield Parish has only one school namely St Peters Church of England School which provides education for infant and junior children. In certain years this school is already near full capacity even without taking into account the expected additional pupillage from the Phase 3 Parsonage development. We understand that in the recent past the reception classes have been oversubscribed and whilst this year there were 7 spare places this does not take into account the additional pupillage accruing from the current development of 130 houses at Parsonage Farm. Any further development resulting from this application will only add to this problem. There is no secondary school facility so that all children over the age of 11 years have to travel out of the area for the next stage of their education.

c) MEDICAL CENTRE

Henfield Health Centre is a very busy practice and has advised HPC that whilst it would seek to respond to any increase in population by providing extra health care professionals and staff, a further 102 homes might create a need for the actual building to be expanded and there are very few NHS funds available for help in providing for such an expansion at this time. Many local residents have informed HPC that it is already virtually impossible to get a non-emergency appointment in the same week as it is requested.

d) EMPLOYMENT

There is already a significant shortage of employment opportunities available in the area and the prospect of a further 200 adult inhabitants will increase the strain on available employment or lead to further unemployment. It is clear that with few opportunities for new employment in the area, Henfield residents will have to commute out of the village for work. Additional housing will result in additional residents adding to this problem!

The proposed scale of this development will therefore impact on the deliverability and sustainability of such development. Furthermore the Parsonage Farm development of 130 dwellings together with the current development of 12 units at Townsmead (DC/10/1588) will, when combined with this proposal for 102 dwellings, make a total of 244 additional dwellings (increase of 10% on current Henfield housing stock). This is unsustainable and goes against FAD Criteria 3 in relation to the cumulative impact on the settlement. Criteria 3 states *“The scale of the development adjoining a Category 1 settlement does not exceed around 150 or accumulatively to accord with the aims of Policies CP1, CP3, CP8, CP9, CP19, DC9”*.

e) ACCESS TO AND WITHIN SITE

- i) The proposed access to this site is considered unsuitable. The road known as Wantley Hill Estate is very narrow and of necessity has parking of residents' vehicles on the road side. The road itself measures approximately 6.15 metres; resident parking on one side reduces the available road width to 4.3 metres. For a significant part of the day access is by single lane only as a result. There are already difficulties experienced by larger delivery trucks/refuse vehicles in gaining access. Further, this is the main access road serving this estate which comprises 250 residences many occupied by families with young children. The proposed development would generate at least 170 extra cars which would make this access totally unacceptable and indeed dangerous.
- ii) West Sussex County Council and HPC both have a right of way for vehicular traffic across the northern part of the site in order to access land adjoining the development site and this proposal would prevent this access. There are also 'unofficial' footpaths across the site which are regularly used by the residents and have been for many years

f) ACCESS FROM SITE TO FACILITIES.

This proposed development is East of the A281. Inhabitants of the proposed development, including presumably many young children, would have to cross the busy A 281 to obtain access to:

- St Peter's Church of England School.
- Henfield Health Centre
- Henfield Leisure Centre
- Henfield Youth Club
- Scout and Guide Huts
- The Parish Church of St Peter's and Corpus Christi Catholic Church.
- Henfield Library
- The Post Office

The only communal facilities on the East side of the A281 are the Henfield Village Hall and the Evangelical Free Church.

The A281 is a busy and heavily used road which already requires the assistance of a Crossings Officer at school time but otherwise there is no specified crossing place to access these facilities. The safety aspects of this are clear and again unacceptable.

g) ENVIRONMENTAL

This site comprises Grade 2 agricultural land and compares with Sub Grade 3A & 3B agricultural land at Parsonage Farm. In the early 1990s the then Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) did not object to the allocation of the Parsonage Farm site for housing but did object to any allocation of land east of Manor Close for development. At that time Horsham District Council accepted that the case against developing land east of Manor Close was “stronger, particularly given the agricultural land quality constraints”. In 2007 the Planning Inspector, when reviewing Horsham District Council’s Alternative Development Sites Plan, concluded in respect of Alternative Site ADS26 (Land South of Chanctonbury View Henfield) *“as predominately Grade 2 agricultural land PPS7 advises that preference should be given to the use of poorer quality land for built development where this would be consistent with other sustainability objectives”*. This view was shared by Horsham District Council in its response statement. HPC opposes the loss of good quality agricultural land to development and would emphasise that the proposed site is outside the Village Envelope and is treated as a Green Field site. Further this land forms a buffer zone for wildlife between the rear gardens of the houses in Wantley Hill, Manor Close, Nyes Close and Benson Road and the arable fields beyond.

A similar approach was endorsed by Horsham District Council when application was made in 1991 for a Doctor’s surgery to be erected on the southern part of the site in question. Possible use of this site for development was contained in the draft Reserve Housing Site document issued by Horsham District Council in 2008 but following strong local opposition, particularly from Henfield, this document was withdrawn and replaced by Facilitating Appropriate Development document.

h) SEWERAGE PROVISION

HPC considers that the natural fall of the proposed site from South to North is ideal for the gravity-fed sewerage system that can be built into the site for connection to manhole Reference No 6601, immediately to the North of the site. The sewage generated by the proposed new development, will, however, have an adverse effect on the sewerage system at the Parsonage Farm development both existing and proposed.

Two existing foul sewers run in a northerly direction, one in the London Road and the other parallel to it further to the West via an intercept chamber into the foul sewer the proposed development will connect into. At times of heavy rainfall these sewers become overloaded because of the ingress of surface water. When this extra volume of sewage and surface water reaches the intercept chamber the surplus volume is redirected to the existing pumping station to the West of London Road, to be pumped via a rising main back into the gravity-fed sewer before it reaches the sewerage works. This is the main that the proposed development will connect into.

HPC is already extremely concerned that when the above situation arises it causes the sewage from the existing Parsonage Farm Estate to back up with dirty water which, on occasions, runs overland into the local watercourse. At times some properties cannot flush their lavatories. This is before 130 new homes come on stream. We feel the expected 42,687 litres of sewage and dirty water every 24 hours arising from the proposed development will exacerbate an already unacceptable situation.

j) WATER SUPPLY

Residents of Manor Close already complain that their water supply is often of poor quality, very cloudy and sometimes dirt coloured. There appear to be existing difficulties maintaining a clear water supply in the area of this proposed development and HPC is concerned it will overload the infrastructure in that respect.

k) FLOODING

There is a perceived risk of flooding adjacent to this site. The land has a natural fall from South to North but there is also a slope to the West. This at the moment drains water towards the houses in Manor Close and on occasions there has been flooding on the northern and western boundaries on the site. The proposed development would increase this likelihood due to the increase in hard infrastructure and the consequent reduction in natural drainage.

5) CONCLUSION

HPC is extremely concerned as to the effect of this proposed development on the landscape and intrusion on the countryside together with the loss of tranquillity which would result from development of this site. Whilst principally affecting the residents adjacent to the site the effect will be felt throughout the village as a result of additional traffic and resulting noise and pollution. The quality of life of the residents of this country village is already under pressure as a result of the number of houses recently built and those for which planning consent has already been granted and this proposal is therefore unacceptable to those residents who have expressed a view.

A very well attended public meeting took place on 15th November 2011 when over 200 residents from all parts of the village attended and put forward their views. Not one person indicated their support for the proposal and the opposition was clear and strong.

HPC is very mindful of the principles of the draft National Planning Policy Framework which is currently making its way through Parliament. The underlying principle of which confirms that local people and their accountable councils can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities. The Minister has stated that planning must be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which we live our lives adding that in the past planning has tended to exclude rather than include people and communities with the intention that local people are empowered to shape their surroundings. This application does not reflect our community's needs nor does it support its health and well being. It does not enhance the environment nor does it satisfy any discernible need. If accepted this development would effectively be turning a Village into a Town.

6 December 2011