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Ms Tamara Dale
Planning Officer
Horsham District Council
Parkside, Chart Way, Horsham
West Sussex RH12 1RL

5 February 2018

Dear Ms Dale

LETTER 1

DC/17/2524: Variation of Condition 1 to previously approved application DC/15/2493 (Erection of three two storey houses). Minor material amendments to facilitate alterations to approved site layout and approved designs. Micklegate, Nuthurst Street, Nuthurst, West Sussex.

Amended plans dated 11 December 2017

Latest plans dated 22 January 2018

The Parish Council is extremely concerned that these latest, confusing plans have been accepted by HDC without the applicant providing a proper, accompanying statement/explanation. This lack of clarity has reduced the public's ability to comment on the application, and thereby reduced people's democratic rights. This is a serious matter. On the public's behalf, the Parish Council has asked HDC for such an explanation for what the applicant is proposing/seeking but has not received a satisfactory reply.

The Parish Council has had to spend a considerable amount of time un-picking this confusing application and has come to the conclusion that it must strongly object to it. The Parish Council does so in two letters: this is Letter 1 and deals with a wide range of issues. Letter 2 deals specifically with the space above the garage and is submitted separately.

The Parish Council's previous objections set out in the following documents are still considered to be fully valid. They are set out in:

- Original objection of 27 November 2017
- Letter of 30 November 2017 to Amanda Wilkes
- Letter of 21 December 2017 to Tamara Dale
- Letter of 16 January 2018 to Emma Parkes
- Letter of 16 January 2018 to Tamara Dale

In summary, the Parish Council's previous objections in these documents include:

- Contravention of the objective of the Neighbourhood Plan to provide smaller houses for young people and downsizers.
- Contravention of Policy 7 of the Neighbourhood Plan because what has been built and marketed are 4/5 bed houses, not the 2 or 3 bed houses or bungalows specifically required by the Neighbourhood Plan
- Contravention of Policy 10 of the Neighbourhood Plan because...
 - the houses have been moved forward in their plots, are now orientated in an urban-style straight line; and
 - the increased footprint of the house and garage, the increased height of the house and particularly above the garage have resulted in an increased roof area, thereby increasing the volume/bulk of the houses.

Both the above points mean that the scale, density, massing and height no longer reflect the character and scale of the surrounding buildings which are primarily bungalows, and the 3 buildings have thereby eroded the character and visual amenities of the locality.

A recent Decision Report by the Planning Inspectorate is highly relevant to this planning application at Micklepage, and has strengthened the Parish Council's case for its opposition to this application. The report in question was written by the Planning Inspectorate and dismissed an appeal relating to "Land at Church Road, Mannings Heath". There are multiple similarities between the site at Church Road and that at Micklepage. Both are semi-rural sites but Micklepage is arguably more rural, with a listed farmhouse just metres away along a narrow lane, a field to the front of the site, another field to the rear, and with ancient woodland in view.

In connection with Land at Church Road, Mannings Heath, the Planning Inspector's dismissal report said (paragraph 6),

" the proposal would introduce three large detached dwellings of a significant scale and mass to the site". As stated above, the applicant at Micklepage has increased the footprint of both the houses and their garages, (the latter noted by the WSCC Highways officer), increased the height of the houses and their garages,

(by 1.4m) and thereby increased the area of roofing. This gives the houses greater volume/bulk and therefore their scale and mass have become “*significant*”.

Furthermore, the Planning Inspector also says, (paragraph 6)

“The bulk and scale of the dwellings along with their positioning in relation to each other would significantly erode the openness and semi-rural quality of the area...and stand very prominently and appear as an incongruous addition to the street scene....to the detriment of the character and appearance of the area”.

Note that the three houses have been moved forward towards the lane (house 3 by 10m), have been placed in a very urban-style straight line (instead of being staggered). If Micklepage goes to appeal, these features, together with the houses’ increased mass/volume/bulk and their changed position are also likely to be seen by a Planning Inspector as “*very prominent*” and “*incongruous*” when viewed by him or her walking along a narrow access lane leading to a listed building, with a field opposite, ancient woodland nearby and in close vicinity to the low-roofed bungalows along Nuthurst Street.

Furthermore, the Planning Inspector also says, (paragraph 9),

(There would be) “... conflict with Policy 10 of the NPNP which seeks to ensure that development reflects the scale, density and massing of surrounding buildings”

The surrounding buildings at Micklepage are primarily bungalows that are much lower in height, smaller in volume, well-spaced apart from each other and well set back from the road in spacious green plots. In contrast, the 3 houses at Micklepage are very close to the access lane with little scope for green front gardens, they are taller, with greater roof areas and larger in mass than neighbouring properties. Consequently, as built, the Micklepage houses do not reflect the surrounding buildings in any way and are therefore in contravention of Policy 10 of the Nuthurst Parish Neighbourhood Plan. Note that the Planning Inspectorate thus gives full weight to the Nuthurst Parish Neighbourhood Plan and HDC now needs to implement exactly the same stance.

The reasons given by the Planning Inspector for the dismissal of the appeal at Church Road clearly apply with equal force to the houses built at Micklepage. These reasons alone should provide a strong imperative for a refusal of planning permission at Micklepage. But, as shown in this Letter 1 and Letter 2, there are many other reasons for refusal.

Given this latest judgement by the Planning Inspectorate, and the extent of other objections made previously to on-going planning applications at Micklepage, the Parish Council can see no alternative but for HDC to finally issue a refusal of

planning permission. The applicant would have the right to appeal, and that would now undoubtedly be the best way to resolve this highly unsatisfactory situation. The removal of final decision-making from local agencies would have an additional benefit: it would hopefully be seen as providing a more objective assessment of the Micklepage scenario and go a long way to restoring the public's confidence in the planning system, which is sadly very much lacking.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hall
Clerk to Nuthurst Parish Council

Copy: Tom Crowley, Chief Executive
Chris Lyons, Director of Planning, Economic Development and Property
Emma Parkes, Head of Development