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9th June 2019

Planning Department
Horsham District Council
Park North
North Street
Horsham
West Sussex RH12 1RL

Dear Sir

DC/19/1119: Outline application for the erection of 5 No. dwellings with all matters reserved except for access: Land at Millers Mead, Nuthurst Street, Nuthurst

The Parish Council considered this planning application very carefully at its meeting on the 5 June 2019, in the presence of the applicant and an associate, who spoke exceedingly forcefully in favour of the application. However, this failed to be endorsed by any of the 31 members of the public who were present.

Councillors wish to make it clear that, until recently, the field was used appropriately as a paddock for horses, hence the stables in one corner.

Councillors unanimously agreed to object strongly to the application on the following grounds.

1. Access

The proposed access is unlawful as retrospective planning permission was refused by HDC in 2017 for the transformation of a grassy public footpath into a hard-surfaced roadway, capable of taking vehicular transport. It is subject to Enforcement Order, EN/17/0062, and this Order was confirmed on appeal by the Planning Inspectorate who, in February 2019, said that the work to remove the crossover and hardstanding should take place “within a month”. This has not happened and the Parish Council expects HDC to take legal action to finally ensure that the work required by the Order is carried out. Since the access is unlawful, and there are no other accesses to the site, the application should be refused. However, there are additional reasons for refusal.

2. Location

The field is outside of the proposed settlement boundary for Nuthurst. It is therefore classified as being in the countryside where development should not normally happen. The proposed development does not support any existing agricultural or countryside activity and the field is therefore not needed as a rural exception site.

The proposal to build outside of the settlement boundary is particularly worrying to the Parish Council since these boundaries are intended to protect the rural countryside from development. If HDC’s policy of settlement boundaries is breached, then no rural areas in the District will have their character and amenity preserved.

3. Neighbourhood Plan (NP)

The NP will provide for circa fifty houses and this figure was confirmed at referendum by 89% of those voting. This site is not allocated for development in the NP or HDC’s Planning Framework, as well as being far from the settlement boundary for Nuthurst. It is not therefore an appropriate site for development and is not needed in the Parish.

4. Type of dwelling

The application is predicated on the provision of affordable/shared ownership properties but the Parish Council considers this to be dis-ingenuous. The field is a totally unsustainable site for affordable housing given that the bus service is

once weekly and there is no easy access to shops, employment opportunities or health services. Any future occupants would be totally reliant on car transport to access any of these essential services.

It should also be noted that housing associations normally seem to require larger numbers of dwellings than five, and for them to be in urban areas. Recently, for example, no housing association could be found for some proposed affordable houses in the far more sustainable NP site located on the A281 in Mannings Heath (DC/16/1753).

Furthermore, the Parish is already making an indirect contribution to affordable housing in the District via S106 monies being paid by two of its NP developments. (DC/16/1753 and DC/15/1946). HDC's recent intervention into the affordable housing sector is welcome (the approval of 18 affordable flats at Bennetts Road/ Elm Grove, Horsham), and should make dis-ingenuous schemes such as this application totally irrelevant.

Additionally, although not strictly affordable housing per se, the Parish's NP is already delivering twenty-three, two and three bedroomed small houses and many more will come from the remaining 5 NP sites. The provision of smaller houses is one of the prime objectives of the NP (p. 17, para 4.2).

5. Back-land development

The proposal is to build on land lying to the rear of dwellings fronting Nuthurst Street. This is unacceptable and yet another reason to refuse the application. The Parish Council was required by the Independent Examiner to remove a back-land site from the Parish's NP. This site was a field behind Hollyhocks and Keatings that adjoins the application site. The Inspector said that the proposed site was behind a row of large houses in large plots, the development would appear incongruous in its setting, out of character with the nearby houses and would fail to protect the rural character of the area. These reasons apply equally to this adjacent site.

HDC refused planning permission for backland development at another site (DC/18/1849). The reason for refusal applies equally to this application, namely

"The proposed development would result in the overdevelopment of this backland site, which would not respect or reflect the pattern of development in the vicinity, to the detriment of the character of the

landscape and visual amenities of the site and wider area. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies 25, 26, 31, 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) and Policy 10 of the Nuthurst Parish Neighbourhood Plan.”

6. Sewage

The applicant has claimed that the settlement has mains drainage which is incorrect. Local residents have individual or group biological treatment systems from which the liquids drain into a ditch and the slurries are removed by lorry. The Parish Council has no confidence that the ditch could cope with any housing built upon this field. Lorries for removal of slurry are not mentioned in the Transport Report.

7. Ecology

The Parish Council notes that there has been no ecological survey, despite the fact that the field is bounded by a designated ancient wood, an old system of drainage ditches and that there is an old pond nearby associated with Micklepage Farmhouse. Each, in turn, is likely to support a wealth of wildlife that should be supported by leaving the environment just as it is, and not allowing house-building on it.

One of the reasons for HDC’s refusing planning permission for a development at “The Mead” (DC/18/2578) (adjacent to the field behind Millers Mead) was:

“Insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the proposed development would have no adverse impact on protected species and its habitat, contrary to Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) and paragraph 175 of the NPPF.”

This reason applies equally to this application.

8. Heritage

Micklepage is listed as a 14thC medieval farmhouse and the field behind Millers Mead was undoubtedly part of its demesne. The Parish Council believes that the field should remain tied to an agricultural/countryside use so as to maintain the historical nature of the area. Another of the reasons for HDC’s refusal of planning permission at “The Mead” was:

“The proposed development would further encroach the immediate setting of Micklepage Farm, a Grade II Listed Building, and would draw the historic farm complex into the settlement envelope, thereby further reducing the opportunities to understand it as historically separate. The addition of built form as proposed would therefore result in harm to the setting of the Listed Building, eroding the interpretation of the heritage asset within its historic landscape, contrary to Policy 34 of the HDPF and paragraph 193 of the NPPF.”

This reason applies equally to this application.

The Micklepage complex is currently used by religious groups as a retreat and chapel. The Parish Council would like to see its present tranquility retained so that the buildings can continue to be used in this peaceful way. Development of the field behind Millers Mead with its need for refuse lorries, deliveries of fuel and car journeys could put the future of this retreat very much at risk.

1. Effect on the owners of Winthrift

The Parish Council points out that the owners have already had far too much to tolerate. The green and narrow footpath that once ran alongside the full and considerable length of their garden has been unlawfully transformed into a hard-surface roadway by the owners of the field, thus exposing them, their activities and their property to public gaze. Their peace, privacy and security has gone and this proposed development threatens to add the noise, dust and fumes from cars and lorries to their daily lives. Frankly, none of what has already happened and what is proposed by this application is acceptable.

CONCLUSION

The Parish Council urges HDC to roundly refuse this application on all the grounds noted above and views this as especially important given that the applicant will almost certainly go to appeal and the reasons for refusal therefore need to be very comprehensive.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hall
Clerk to Nuthurst Parish Council