

PLANNING APPLICATION DM/22/2485 – RESPONSE FROM ALBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL

General statement:

Outline permission for the retirement village was given on appeal. This was a highly contentious appeal given the rural location of the site and very limited public transport, and it is worth highlighting the reasons and some of the conditions for the appeal decision.

The appeal applicant, Retirement Villages Ltd, persuaded the planning inspector that given Mid Sussex had a high general level of homeowner occupiers, that there was a severe shortage of extra care housing for sale in Mid Sussex, and the result of this is that Mid Sussex older residents were not moving into 'more suitable' retirement accommodation and freeing up their existing properties for younger family occupation. In para 93 of the appeal decision, the planning inspector concludes '*In the circumstances I consider the evidence indicates a significant level of current unmet need, in particular for extra care leasehold housing*'. Indeed, in her overall conclusions para 137, she states '*the provision of extra care leasehold housing to meet a considerable level of unmet need is of particular importance*'

The appeal applicants, Retirement Villages Ltd, persuaded the planning inspector that they would be developing the site themselves and provided a tour of an existing site at East Grinstead that they had developed and operated. Para 124 of the Inspector's report says '*I was told that Retirement Villages will be developing the site itself and thereafter managing the development as part of its extra care portfolio. Much store was set on the high quality of the development and the way the proposed layout had been designed to respect the existing landscape and views. In order to ensure this is carried forward into the scheme that eventually materialises, it is necessary to require compliance with the Parameter Plan and Sketch Layout*'.

Due to the severe assessed unmet need for leasehold extra care accommodation and the fact the inspector was misled into believing Retirement Villages Ltd would build and operate the development, the inspector included a planning condition to ensure speedy progress was included. '*1. Application of the reserved matters shall be made to the local planning authority before the expiration of 2 years from the date of this permission*'.

In the light of these concerns, Albourne Parish Council objects to this application, and takes the view that the plans now presented have been rushed, in order to meet the appeal planning condition deadline.

The Council is also disappointed that despite asking on a number of occasions, Inspired Villages chose not to share any of their detailed proposals included in this planning application with us as part of the consultation process.

It is also worth noting that Inspired Villages was established very recently in 2017, and does not appear to have a track record of this type of development.

Specific objections:

Design - design is subjective, and in our view the proposed design is bland and urban and not in keeping with this rural location. In addition, the Design and Access Statement Part 3 comparative site plan/overlays clearly shows the built form on the site to be significantly in excess of the outline approval and does not comply with the Parameter Plan and Sketch Layout as required by the planning inspector.

Tenure – as highlighted above, the outline permission was given due to the perception of an urgent and specific need for owner occupied extra care housing. This application gives no indication of the tenure proposed for the development.

Transport – Albourne Parish Council have always argued Hazelden's is an unsustainable location for this development, which will be reliant on private cars, given the very poor public transport in this location, and given that the targeted residents (i.e. requiring care, so presumably having issues with walking and cycling) and in terms of the staffing. The travel plan submitted demonstrates and emphasises this with an allocation of 104 parking spaces for the development of 84 units. The single minibus proposed by the developers is insufficient and there is no meaningful plan of how staff or residents trips by car will be reduced.

Drainage – the proposal for surface water drainage is inadequate. The Drainage Statement states *'Discussions with third party landowners to the north and west of the site have been ongoing for several months regarding a gravity connection via their land. However, at the stage of writing this report, it has not been possible to agree commercial terms with either party. Therefore, there is a requirement to pump surface water to the culverted section of the watercourse that passes beneath the highway'*. This is another example where this application has been rushed to meet the outline permission two year deadline. To propose to pump surface water uphill to the B2116 because the applicant has not managed to agree reasonable solutions with adjacent landowners is not acceptable. If suitable drainage is not possible then surely this development cannot be approved.

Lighting – Albourne Parish Council is very concerned about the light pollution this development will create. The External Lighting Report states that *'All external lighting (except for safety and security lighting) will be set to automatically switch off between 2300 and 0700'*. However, there is no definition we can find as to what is considered to be safety and security lighting. In addition, the design of the properties with large glass windows will add to the adverse impacts. We could not find a plan showing the anticipated light spill from the site to the surrounding area in the provided documentation.

Highways – there are inadequate traffic calming measures for this dangerous section of the B2118 with regard to speeding traffic. Any traffic calming proposed needs to demonstrate agreement with WSCC, to be mandated, and to ensure they are delivered.

Public access to facilities- the promised public access to certain facilities at the proposed retirement village, are vague. More detail and definite delivery is required

to demonstrate what benefit (if any) this development will deliver for the existing residents of Albourne.

For these reasons we would urge MSDC to refuse this application.