

HARTING PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **Planning Committee** held at Harting Community Hall at **7pm on Friday 7 July 2023.**

Present: Mrs Bramley (Chair), Mr Bonner, Mrs Curran, Mrs Martin and Mr Shaxson.

In attendance: Trish Walker, Parish Clerk.

22. Apologies for absence: Mr Miller.

23. Declarations of Interest: Mr Shaxson declared a non-prejudicial public service interest as a member of the SDNPA's planning committee and confirmed he would not be voting on the application.

24. Members of the Public Present: 31.

25. Minutes of the meeting on 15 June 2023: the minutes were agreed and signed.

26. Matters of Urgent Public Importance: None.

27. Current Planning Applications:

27.1. SDNP/23/02243/FUL

[Construction of one pair of two bedroom semi-detached and 3No. three bedroom cottages and associated access, parking, cat-barn, gardens and landscaping.](#)

Land East of South Bank Elsted Road South Harting West Sussex

The Chair introduced the application by giving some background to the site as it had been allocated in policy SD87 in the South Downs National Park Local Plan which was adopted in 2019.

Representations were made by members of the public, all in objection to the application. The issues raised were:

- Flooding and foul water – there have been known problems in the village for some years and this development will exacerbate the unresolved issues. The road adjacent to the site floods in heavy rainfall. The Harting sewage works already spills a large amount of untreated sewage into the Rother and even though there is an extension planned to the site there is concern this may not relieve the problems.
- The application does not conform to SD87 as the plot is at least 25% bigger than the original allocation. This increases to 100% if the area for the attenuation and ecology ponds are included
- How will the ponds be maintained
- Concern the creation of the ponds will disturb an area that is already of ecological importance.
- Properties are not accessible due to the number of steps leading to them

- Parking – insufficient number and size of spaces. Tandem parking is not supported by the Local Plan and will mean residents have to reverse out on to a busy road. There is concern there will be an increase in on street parking
- Height of buildings in relation to the surrounding residences and that this will create a ‘tunnel’ feel when entering the village from the east
- Farmland – the site has historically been used to access the field and without this access point, large farm vehicles will be moving up and down North Lane and through the Bohemia Hollows which is very narrow
- Lack of detail regarding the rainwater harvesting and the water neutrality statement

There were no representations made in support of the application.

The members considered the application, and the following comments were agreed:

The Council **OBJECTS** to the proposed development for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development does not “preserve and enhance the setting of South Harting Conservation Area” as required by the SDNPA Local Plan Policy Allocation SD87 and would have a significant impact on the street scape due to the following reasons:
 - a. The ridgeline of the houses would be considerably higher than those at Smithfield, on the other side of the Street. This is contrary to the pre-application advice given which states “buildings should be of a height that remain subservient to the surrounding dwellings, especially those on the other side of the road.” The impact is worsened by the design of the houses, which are deep from front to back. This means that the roof is commensurately wide and therefore high. Noting the importance put on the appearance of the dwellings, the elevations are lacking the necessary detail.
 - b. The houses would be set well above the height of the road, the finished ground floor levels being about 2 metres above the adjacent highway.
 - c. The visual impact of the site not only from the west but also from the east would be considerable. Although the impact of views eastwards is mentioned in para 9.227 accompanying Policy SD87, the eastern impact should be closely considered as the proposed housing, opposite Smithfield, would create a ‘canyon’ effect on entrance to the village and conservation area. The houses would be only 17 metres apart.
 - d. The Council believe the cross-section plans in the application do not show the height differences accurately.
 - e. There is insufficient detail within the plans to indicate the visual appearance of the properties and how materials will be used and hence how these properties will link to the Conservation area. This is essential as para 9.226 of the Local Plan states that ‘as the site currently makes a positive contribution to the setting of the Conservation Area, the development must be designed to a high standard’.
 - f. The Landscape Assessment included in the application refers to a previous set of plans where there was a break in the middle of the proposed houses, enabling the required views northwards from public viewpoints northwards through the site. The current application has the houses situated in a continual block across the site therefore the findings of the Landscape Assessment may not be totally applicable to the current application.

2. The proposed site plan area is contrary to that published in the SDNPA Local Plan Policy SD87 for the following reasons:
 - a. The original plot allocated in the Local Plan Allocation Policy is measured as 0.1 hectares, however the plot in the application measures 0.15 hectares, an increase of 50% on the original allocation. This is because the application site is deeper than that allocated by the policy, being 35 metres deep at the eastern end instead of the 25 metres allocated.
 - b. The area allocated for the attenuation and ecology ponds, 0.1 hectares, was not included in Local Plan allocation. When taken into account this would give a 100% increase over the area of the original allocation.
 - c. The area included for the attenuation and ecology ponds was excluded from the SHLAA application as it was deemed to be of medium to high sensitivity.
 - d. The red line around the application site on the plans includes a large section of the highway and excludes the attenuation area.

3. The proposed development does not appear to have taken sufficient “regard to localised areas of potential surface water flooding” as detailed in the SDNPA Local Plan Policy Allocation SD87. The Council has concerns that:
 - a. The majority of surfaces on the plans are hard surfaces. Given the potential run off from the site the Council is not convinced the use of hard surfaces has been suitably minimised as detailed in policy SD87
 - b. There are long-standing flooding problems that would have an unacceptable impact on this development and exacerbate an existing problem. Both as a result of gulleys not being maintained and roads swept, in wet periods large amounts of water – and debris - comes from the West Harting road west of the junction with the Rogate road by Pays Farm, down North Lane and collects in the lowest point on the Elsted road outside the proposed entrance to the parking area for the 3 houses. The gulleys by the application site habitually block, and the planning committee noted that in the entrance to the development is a channel drain to take water from the site. Water flooding on the road which can be up to a foot deep, will enter this drain and will flow into, and overwhelm, the attenuation ponds. In any case channel drains are an inefficient and ineffective way to pick up surface flow as they are easily damaged and block.

4. The proposed development does not satisfy the requirement to “provide all necessary vehicular parking on-site to avoid additional on street parking in local roads” as detailed in para 1c of the SDNPA Local Plan Policy Allocation SD87 due to the following reasons:
 - a. The use of tandem parking in properties 1 and 2 is contrary to section 3.8 of the SDNPA ‘Guidance on Parking for Residential and Non-Residential Development Supplementary Planning Document’ which states that “Layouts should avoid the use of “tandem parking” in providing spaces at a development”. This is because experience has shown that it is an unsatisfactory and inefficient way to provide two parking spaces.
 - b. Tandem parking will result in vehicles reversing on to the Elsted road from two driveways. This is a busy road where visibility and traffic movements are already compromised by overflow on-street parking alongside Smithfield.

- c. The pre-app advice suggests there is a need for 11-12 parking spaces to include visitor parking. In spite of the guidance and the specific SD87 policy requirements, the proposed development has only 11 spaces. Further the two properties using tandem parking can only be used by those properties, even if they have only one or no cars. The three spaces inside the cart barn have charging points, one for each of the allocated properties. The result is that it is only the four spaces outside the cart barn that could be used by any of the properties and /or visitors. The Council feels this is a grossly inadequate way to provide sufficient space for the residents and visitors thereby creating further on street parking and congestion, which would especially impact on large farm equipment which passes through the village on a very regular basis.
 - d. There is concern expressed by WSCC Highways that the size of parking spaces, and the limited space for movements in the area servicing the 3 3-bed houses is contrary to parking guidance. The Parish Council share this concern.
5. The proposed development is contrary to Local Plan Policy SD27 which states “Development proposals will be permitted for residential development that provides flexible and adaptable accommodation to meet the needs of people who are less mobile or have adult homecare requirements. Development proposals of 5 or more homes will be permitted where it is clearly demonstrated that evidence of local need for older people’s or specialist housing is reflected in the types of homes proposed”. The pre-application advice reinforces the need to comply with this requirement. The houses in the proposed application do not fulfil this requirement as all access points to the houses and the garden areas have steps.
6. The current sewage system in South Harting is already insufficient for the current number of houses. In 2022 untreated sewage was discharged into the river Rother for a total of 3154.83 hours. This is the highest level in the area and is not acceptable. Southern Water have a planning application to expand the current treatment works in South Harting, but this has not yet been granted. There is no guarantee that the proposed work will elevate the long-standing problem. The Council urges the planning authority to allow no further development until this work has been satisfactorily completed and the problem resolved.
7. The Council feels further information is required about the management of the attenuation and ecology ponds and the area they are shown to be in. This would be required to be monitored and maintained in perpetuity. This area is already supporting wildlife and the hedgerow between the site and the stream is noted to be an area of high ecological importance it is important this is not undermined. Concerns have been expressed in comments by Maral Miri, HCC Ecology Team, that the proposed planting would be swamped by the existing vegetation. Is there the requirement to provide a Habitats Regulation Assessment? This is especially important as para 2 of Policy SD87 indicates that the development must have an ‘overall positive impact on the ability of the natural environment to contribute to ecosystems services’.
8. The Council questions the Water Neutrality Statement especially in relation to the spreading of the impact across 11 other properties owned by the applicant. There is a need to understand how this can be monitored and assessed in agreeing to the application and in the long term to ensure compliance.

The Council supports the 'proposed' rainwater harvesting but feels more information is required to support the Water Neutrality Statement.

9. There is concern locally that this section of land is the current access point for agricultural vehicles servicing the rest of the field. The proposed development would not allow access for agricultural vehicles and being displaced they would need to access the field via another entrance to the north of South Harting through Bohemia Hollow by travelling along North Lane. Access to it would require the transit of extremely narrow points and especially at harvest time could present a real danger to road users. This is in conflict with policy SD21, para 2. The Council urges the planning officers to look at and investigate this impact closely.
10. Listening to the comments by the 27 members of the public who attended the planning committee meeting, the committee noted that the site is allocated in the Local Plan Allocation Policy SD87 for 5-6 Residential dwellings. Such dwellings could be smaller, and noting the concerns raised about impact and cramming on the site, which is in any case larger than the allocation, it feels the proposed development is not suitable because its bulk and mass has a negative impact on the South Harting Conservation Area and street scene. Less obtrusive dwellings could be more acceptable.
11. The Council urges the planning officers to ensure swift and other bird and bat boxes are included within the criteria, this would support the local initiative 'Operation Nest Box' by the Harting CAN group. We stress that we believe the development could be much more sustainable. In the light of rapidly developing climate change more should be proposed.
12. Finally, we understand there is a requirement for the pre-app documents to be included with the application documents. It should not be necessary to have to search for them, and further they should include all relevant paperwork in order that consultees can properly consider whether the applicant has addressed all issues arising.

28. To note any planning appeals: None.

29. To note any planning appeal decisions: None.

30. Date of next meeting: Thursday 20 July 2023 in Harting Community Hall, time to be confirmed.

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.30pm.