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Mr A Watt
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By email: planninginfo@midsussex.gov.uk

Subject: Byanda, Brighton Road, Hassocks. Planning Ref DM/21/1653 – Objection

Dear Mr Watt,

I am writing on behalf of my wife and I concerning my objections to the above planning application. Please find below a brief executive summary followed by a detailed discussion of our concerns.

Executive summary:

- There are many reasons to object this application and very few to commend it, especially given the seeming lack of need in the area as evidenced by Mid Sussex District Council's paper "Site Allocations Development Plan Document Housing for Older People Topic Paper" (see discussion point 1).
- Concerns exist on many levels, especially given the magnitude and imposing nature of the development which would be hugely overbearing for many neighbouring properties. It is totally out of keeping with the area and will be highly visible from the road and adjacent national park. Privacy concerns also exist for properties to the North and West of the development (see discussion points 2 and 3).
- Several concerns relate to the access road which is outside the control of the developers. This is on quite a gradient, steepening as it enters the Brighton Road with a significant difference in level from east to west which is not fully reflected in the plans. This creates a significant difference in level with the proposed car park which will require a steep ramp, requiring a major redesign of the car park, possibly reducing capacity of the already inadequate car park even further. The proposed plans also risk the structural integrity of the driveway given the proximity of the 3.5 storey building and concerns exist about the viability of getting services (including sewage) to and from the site with the only access being a very narrow channel to the side of the driveway (see discussion points 5,6 and 7).

- Not least of the concerns surrounding the access road are the traffic and safety implications. It is predicted that there will be a significant increase of traffic, both in and out of the site into a concealed, steeply inclined junction just metres from the site of a recent fatality (see discussion point 8). The gradient of the access road casts doubt on the accuracy of the visibility splays within the Transport plan.
- There are also a number of oversights within the Tree Protection with some notable omissions and it is our belief that the RPR of a number of trees and hedgerows has not been correctly observed within the plan (see discussion point 4).
- As local residents we appreciate the need for new development but feel that the previously approved plans are much more in keeping with area as well as local need. The architectural proposal is not unattractive as such, but it is completely out of keeping with the semi-rural residential area and totally out of proportion with the site size thus raising many of these concerns. If it is deemed that there is need for a C2 care home, we would ask that consideration be given to keeping the size of the proposition in line with other similar establishments within similar sized plots and this would alleviate many of the concerns raised.

Discussion:

1 Local Need

It is questionable whether there is an unmet need for C2 care homes in the area. Mid Sussex District Council's paper "Site Allocations Development Plan Document Housing for Older People Topic Paper", December 2020 noted that there was a surplus of C2 accommodation, specifically nursing care at the base date of 2014. It also noted that there is likely to be decrease in nursing care demand by 2031. Many of the high dependency residents of the proposed care home would fit into this category.

<https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/5812/tp4-housing-for-older-people-topic-paper.pdf>

An increased need for residential care was noted although it should be highlighted that a number of other large developments in the area are already at more advanced stages of approval.

2 Nature and size of proposed development

The proposed building is completely out of keeping with existing properties in the area which are largely moderate family homes in a semi-rural setting. The previously approved development of 4 homes fitted well within this setting. In contrast, this vast, monolithic structure, which is larger than the imposing Danny House is unsuited for this site. Similar developments ordinarily sit in sites of several acres whereas it is being proposed to squeeze this structure into a one-acre site.

Being three storeys with a pitched roof, it is significantly higher than existing structures or the previously approved development which was for buildings 2 storeys high plus roof space. It should be noted that the 4 houses previously approved were also broken up and positioned not to be highly visible from the road or surrounding neighbours.

The proposed development would completely dominate the skyline from almost every angle. From the East, the elevation drawings suggest it will be more than twice as high as the garage block outside Highdown and Stackley House (see picture).

The hedgerow to the north of the garage block provides partial screening of the existing property but would scarcely shield the new development which elevates to twice the height of this hedgerow. Furthermore, this hedgerow is not within the control of the developers and neither is it within our control. The visual impact of the development must also be considered in the event that the hedgerow was no longer present. The integrity of the hedgerow is even under threat by the development itself.

The shear scale of the propose development within a relatively small plot also leaves little in the way of external space for residents of its 66 bedrooms and we would suggest that this may be inadequate and needs further consideration.

Picture: View from Stackley House to East of development. The proposed development will be more that twice the height of the garage block in view and adjacent hedgerow.



3 Privacy

The proposed building has privacy implications for many surrounding properties. The southern-most properties of Pound Gate, just to the north of the development most likely fall within 15 m of the proposed northern wall of the proposed development. Currently these properties are not overlooked but under the plans, they would be faced by 27 windows over 3 storeys on this flank of the building. In winter, when the natural cover provided by the foliage is lost, this creates a significant privacy issue.

Similarly, properties to the immediate West of the development, namely North Dean House and South Dean House would also be overlooked. With respect to North Dean and South Dean house, they would be overlooked by multiple windows and balconies up to the height of 3 floors.

Although these properties may sit just over 15m away from the development, given the semi-rural nature of the environment, a greater degree of privacy can be expected.

With these concerns in mind, we would recommend that if a care home development is felt to be beneficial, then the scale, height and position in relation to neighbours need to be reconsidered to reduce these privacy concerns.

4 Trees and ecological considerations

The Tree Protection plan omits to mention that there is a large Chestnut tree at the north-eastern corner of the property which is under the ownership of Faerie Glen. This stands just to the side of the access gate to Faerie Glen and adjoining properties. This long-established tree has a diameter well in excess of 1m and therefore would seem to qualify for maximum root protection with a 15m radius. We believe this is not reflected in the plans and that this needs to be considered with relation to the position of the proposed development and foundations.

Similarly, we are concerned that the root protection that should be afforded to hedgerow H13, which is outside the ownership of the developers, is not not fully reflected in the plans.

Well established trees T38 and T39, to the northern edge of the access road, are deemed to have a root protection radius of 5.4m according to the Tree Protection plan. These trees are outside the ownership of the developers and their RPR may be encroached upon by proposed work to run services through a narrow channel just to the south of the access road.

The land flanking the northern bank of the access road comprises a large naturally occurring body of water with associated woodland and is a rich source of biodiversity. The proposed 3.5 story building immediately flanking a large part of the southern side of the access road would plunge a large part of this woodland and watercourse into permanent shade.

5 Access Road concerns

The proposed development sits immediately adjacent to the existing and only access road to the properties to the east of the development. Given that the proposed development is 3.5 storeys, substantial excavation and foundations will be required. There are concerns that this work could compromise the integrity of the existing drive. Can the developers offer assurances on this issue? Perhaps consideration should be given to moving the development back away from the access road to reduce this risk?

6 Staffing model

The staffing model proposed within the planning application is questionable. It is suggested that there will be no more than 15 staff on site. This is likely to be a significant under-estimation which will in turn have implications for traffic movement in and out of the site as well as parking.

The planning statement highlights that the facility will provide care for all dependency levels including on site nursing. For high dependency patients, then staff/resident ratio of 2 to 1 may be required for such patients. Furthermore, a 66-bedroom care home could accommodate significantly more than 66 residents and many similar care homes house 2 residents in some rooms. These factors suggest that the figure of 15 staff on site is a significant under-estimation.

This sector has significant problems with staff turnover suggesting that many staff will be agency staff travelling from out of area. The transport document confirms that there is no bus travel during unsociable hours and no other local parking and so staff will place considerable demands on available car parking within the development.

7 Parking

It seems likely that the level of parking provision is inadequate (only 17 plus 2 accessible bays and one ambulance bay) and there are also concerns about the proposed car park design, especially given the significant vertical drop between the access driveway and the proposed level of the car park. Based on the factors outlined under section 6, it seems that the number on staff on site could be significantly more than 15.

It is also our understanding that with respect to a similarly sized 70 bed development that has been approved in Sayers Common, based on the Mid Sussex parking standards some 27 car parking spaces are required. Given this fact, it seems reasonable that similar standards at least should apply?

The access road has a significant gradient to it and there is a difference in elevation of several metres from the Eastern end to the entrance onto the Brighton Road. At the point it is proposed to turn off the access road into the car park, there will be a vertical drop of at

least 2 metres to the proposed level of the car park. This will require a substantial redesign of the proposed car park with a fairly steep ramp descending from the access road into the car park. It seems likely that given the steepness of the ramp required, several of the car park spaces at the northern aspect of the car park may not be viable spaces reducing capacity further.

With the proposed level of the car park being significantly lower than the access road, this will also require substantial excavation of the bank to the west of the development, and this could have structural implications for North Dean and South Dean Houses. Can the developers offer assurances on this issue or perhaps considerations should be given to moving the car park further away from these properties to help preserve the structural integrity of these banks? Given that these car parks will also be in use 24 hours a day, the proximity of the car park also creates concern surrounding the disturbance to North Dean and South Dean Houses

The access road itself is not under the control of the developers and it is our understanding that no alteration to this road will be permitted. As such, the gradient of the drive and subsequent differences in levels between the access road and the development take on extra importance. These are not reflected in the proposals, and we would suggest that a full level survey plan should be included as part of the application to help fully understand these issues.

8 Transport

The TRICS data within the Transport statement suggests an extra vehicle entering or leaving the access road every 5-6 minutes at busy times of the day. We would consider this to be significant and may in fact be an underestimation given the likely under-reporting of required staffing levels. Given that this junction lies not 20m from the site of a recent fatality any increase in traffic flow in or out of this junction needs to be considered very carefully. Furthermore, the access junction is narrower and less visible than the junction associated with the very sad fatality as well as having a steep incline. Traffic is also likely to be travelling faster in both directions at this point, being further from the crossroads.

The gradient of the access road actually reaches 8 degrees or more at its steepest as it reaches the pavement, twice the gradient of the A273 as it crosses up and over the South Downs from the Jack and Jill public house.

This gradient is not reflected in the visibility splays within the Transport data and casts doubt on their accuracy. Firstly, due to the steep gradient, the driver's head is further back in the seat relative to the road at the point of exit, thus reducing the field of vision. The gradient also reduces visibility of the far side of the road.

Sadly, recent events serve as a very prescient warning and we would therefore encourage careful consideration of any application that significantly impacts on traffic in or out of this junction. Our understanding is that the previously approved development of this site would have far less impact traffic wise and also that an understanding was in place for the

developer to improve the access. It is also our understanding that with respect to this new application, any alteration to the driveway to improve access will not be possible.

9 Inaccuracies within the application and associated documents

There are a number of significant inaccuracies within the proposed planning application and supporting documents.

Below are a few examples although this list is by no means exclusive.

- The planning application states that there is one detached dwelling on the site. This is untrue as there are two.
- The planning application states that the site is vacant. This is untrue as one of the two residential buildings is occupied.
- The application states that there is no watercourse within 20m of the proposal. Again, this is untrue as there is a naturally occurring watercourse immediately adjacent to the access road on the northern boundary.
- The associated documents omit to mention the large chestnut at the north-eastern border which is likely to be subject to a maximum 15m RPR.

Whilst some of these examples may not necessarily materially affect the proposal, they do suggest a pattern and must raise question marks about the accuracy and integrity of some of the documents and claims.

We appreciate that with the ongoing pandemic, the usual due diligence to date may not have been feasible but with a consideration of this magnitude, hopefully rigorous consideration of the application along with the necessary surveys and investigations is now possible.

In conclusion:

As local residents we appreciate the need for new development but feel that the previously approved plans are much more in keeping with area as well as local need. The architectural proposal is an attractive building, yet out of keeping with the semi-rural residential area totally out of proportion with the site thus raising many of these concerns. If it is deemed that there is need for such an establishment, we would ask that consideration be given to keeping the size of the proposition in line with other similar establishments within similar sized plots and this would alleviate many of the concerns raised.

Yours sincerely,

Richard and Kate Jones

June 4th 2021

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