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Sent: 14 April 2025 19:02:32 UTC+01:00
To: "Andy Watt" <Andy.Watt@midsussex.gov.uk>
Cc: "Nicholas Royle" <Nicholas.Royle@midsussex.gov.uk>; "Andrew Marsh" <Andrew.Marsh@midsussex.gov.uk>; "Helen Blackith" <Helen.Blackith@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: DM/25/0484 – Site of 60 Keymer Road, Hassocks, West Sussex BN6 8AR
Housing Initial comments

Dear Andy

Please see my comments below.

**DM/25/0484 – Site of 60 Keymer Road, Hassocks, West Sussex BN6 8AR
Mixed use redevelopment of the site comprising of ground floor commercial/community use and 26 No. new residential units on upper floors alongside associated parking and public realm improvement**

“The applicant is proposing a mixed use redevelopment of a former garage site, including ground floor commercial use and 26 new residential units (comprising 8 x 1B, 15 x 2B and 3 x 3B flats) plus communal lounge and guest bedroom on the upper floors. This gives rise to a minimum onsite affordable housing requirement of 30% in accordance with District Plan Policy DP31 which equates to 8 affordable housing units since, in accordance with the Affordable Housing SPD, the number of affordable housing units is rounded up if not a whole number. The 8 affordable housing units required comprise 2 x 1B/2P flats @ a minimum of 50m² (30% in line with the mix stated in the Affordable Housing SPD) and 6 x 2B/4P flats at a minimum of 70m² (70% in line with the mix stated in the Affordable Housing SPD).

Although on site provision is always preferred, in this instance (due to the nature, design & proposed mix of the development) we would be prepared to accept a commuted sum of £488,000 towards the provision of off-site affordable housing units, rather than on site affordable housing. This sum has been calculated in accordance with the West Sussex Commuted Sum Review letter dated 11th March 2011 for a scheme in Band D as follows: 2 x 1 Bed flats @ £55,000 per unit plus 6 x 2 Bed flats @ £63,000 per unit = £488,000. It would be secured via the section 106 agreement and would be payable prior to Commencement of the Development.

A Viability Report & Appraisal has however been submitted alongside the planning application to support the applicant’s position that as stated in para 6.30 of the Planning Statement “...at present the proposed development would be incapable of viably delivering the affordable housing contribution sought by adopted planning policies”

It is noted that the Viability Report referred to a deduction of Vacant Building Credit but this is not applicable in this instance since, as stated in the Affordable Housing SPD “the intention of VBC is to bring back into use sites which would not otherwise be developed and not simply to reduce the affordable housing requirement of schemes that would come forward without VBC thereby reducing the supply of affordable housing to meet local needs” (Para 2.69). “Indeed VBC will only be applicable to sites to bring them back into use if they would not otherwise be developed (see below). It will not apply to reduce the affordable housing requirement of schemes that would come forward anyway without VBC” (Para 2.70). “There may be some exceptional circumstances where the VBC should be applied and

would, in line with the intention of the policy provide an incentive for development on previously developed sites containing vacant buildings that would not otherwise come forward for development” (Para 2.73). However, in this instance the building has only been empty for 18 months and planning consent is being sought to redevelop the site by the site owners themselves.

A quote will therefore now be sought from an independent viability consultant, in order to enable an assessment of the information provided & assumptions used in the submitted Viability Report & Appraisal to be undertaken. This will ascertain whether or not, as well as payment of all infrastructure contributions due, some or all of the required commuted sum towards off-site affordable housing can viably be provided.

Following receipt of the quote and before the Viability Assessment can commence, a signed Financial Undertaking agreeing to meet all of the Consultant’s costs in carrying out the assessment will be required from the applicant, together with a ‘live’ working Viability Appraisal with a file extension of .wcfx. Confirmation regarding the relevant Section 106 infrastructure contributions for a 100% open market scheme will also be required from yourself.

Finally, I can confirm that final Housing comments will be provided in due course once the results of the Viability Assessment are known”

Kind regards

Helen

Helen Blackith
Housing Enabling Team Manager

Every Affordable Home Matters

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Please note that I only work Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri