

The Design House

Development Consultancy

PLANNING STATEMENT

PROPERTY

Land adjacent to and behind 3 Heathview Cottages, Copthorne Common Road, Copthorne, RH10 3LF

As can be seen from the location plan the site is set within a cluster of dwellings bounded by Copthorne Common Road, Pembley Green and Cottage Place with further housing and commercial space adjoining. It is clearly not isolated.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

25/2379/PIP Approved for up to two dwellings

26/1678/PIP Refused for up to 5 dwellings for the following reason:

1. The proposed scheme, by reason of the amount of dwellings proposed, would result in a cramped development that is out of keeping and harmful to the prevailing spacious and semi-rural character of the area. The proposal would therefore fail to reinforce the positive aspects that contribute to the character of the area, thereby conflicting with policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and policies CNP1 and CNP10 of the Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan.

It should be noted that this refusal was based on the now outdated NPPF despite the council asking for and being granted extra time to consult the new NPPF.

BACKGROUND

The site was heavily overgrown when purchased, with a lack of detail on its previous uses although it did contain a caravan which was connected to both a water supply and main drainage.

Consultations with adjoining neighbours confirm that the caravan had been on site for many years and was used as a home by the previous owner. It is likely that as this residential use had been established more than ten years, it had become immune from enforcement action.

The site has previously been identified as being acceptable for residential development and the officer report to the above approved application agreed that from previous appeals in the locality, the site is in a sustainable location. However, the officer report to the above refusal stated that the council now believe the site isn't in a sustainable location despite evidence to the contrary. They rely for this change of view on a recent appeal decision at Hill House which we will deal with later.

PROPOSAL

This is an application for outline approval for three detached dwellings, with full details provided regarding Access, Layout and Scale of Development and illustrative detail regarding Appearance for the council to reach a determination.

Following a detailed site survey, we now find that it is capable of accommodating more than two dwellings although we agree that up to five dwellings would create a cramped layout. This proposal is for just three dwellings to provide quality new family homes in this location. It will make a valuable contribution to new housing provision in the area and the council's shortfall in the five year housing supply.

JUSTIFICATION

Based on the approved Planning in Principle noted above (25/2379), the following extracts from the officer report to that consent are set out below. The assessment stated the following:

Location

'Whilst the proposed development falls outside the development boundary of Copthorne, the proposal for two houses would not represent isolated development within the countryside by reason of the site being surrounded to the north, west and south by existing properties located on Copthorne Common Road and Pembley Green.

Properties at Cottage Place lie further to the east, between 20 and 65 metres from the site. The design and scale of the proposed dwellings would be considered at the technical consent stage, however, with the above in mind, it is considered that the proposal would maintain the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District'.

Land Use

'As previously noted, the proposed land use is considered to be acceptable as a sustainable form of development which accords with relevant NPPF guidance and would be within an enclave of development. Based on the surrounding residential properties, it is considered that the principle of the use of the site for residential purposes is acceptable'.

Despite this approval and the justification set out in the officer report above and shown in the location plan, the application was refused with the officer report now saying that whilst it is not isolated there is doubt about sustainability.

To justify this the report states:

In addition to the above development plan policies, the recent appeal decision concerning the permission in principle application at Hurst House is a material planning consideration. That application proposed 3 to 4 residential dwellings (including the existing dwelling) and was dismissed as the Inspector considered that the significant adverse effects of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the moderate benefits of the proposal. The adverse effects being that the proposed scheme would not direct development to a sustainable location and would not be sympathetic to local character or add to the overall quality of the area.

THE OFFICER REPORT GOES ON TO SAY:

The site at Hurst House is larger than the parcel of land to the southwest of Heathview Cottages and proposed less dwellings than this current application. Yet the Planning Inspector noted the following regarding impact upon character and appearance

5. The prevalent appearance in this area is of a wooded countryside character with some sporadic buildings. Properties are generally well spaced, set in their own grounds and appropriate to this semirural setting.

Although there is some development including the petrol station and development at Newlands Park, these limited clusters do not alter the overriding countryside character

However, the council's whole argument ignores some obvious facts, namely, the site whilst larger in gross area is severely constrained by the existing house curtilage, the difficulty of providing acceptable access and parking and the substantial area required to meet tree protection requirements. These result in, as noted by the inspector in the refusal, a net usable area not much larger than this application site.

The location, on the opposite side of Copthorne Common Road, is also quite different to the cluster of housing that contains the subject site, with the amenities provided by the garage shopping provision and the Indian take-away next door.

LAYOUT

To assist in the assessment of the proposal we have included an initial site layout showing important aspects of the design process.

For this we have used the base tree protection plan on which has been added the required entrance roadway and required turning head for refuse and delivery vehicles.

The plan shows three well separated building plots on one of which we show the footprint of a typical detached dwelling to show how it relates to the other plots, site boundaries, access arrangements and tree screening.

Although not shown at this stage there is sufficient space between the turning head and site boundary for the inclusion of a bin store.

CONCLUSION .

Taking account of the above, we still believe that the site is in a sustainable location, as previously accepted by the council, within an existing residential enclave, developable with little or no harm caused to the character of the local area.

We further believe that one extra dwelling, making three, is an acceptable amount of development making sensible use of the site, as demonstrated by the layout plan. This echoes the view of the one objector to the refused PIP, Sherwood, whose objection was against more than three dwellings

Due to the size of the site, the present approval is an underuse of the land under the NPPF and the proposed development of three dwellings should be approved.