

**GROVE COTTAGE
CHURCH ROAD
TURNERS HILL
CRAWLEY
WEST SUSSEX RH10 4PB**

Mid Sussex District Council
Planning Services Division
Oaklands
Oaklands Road
Haywards Heath
West Sussex RH16 1SS

30 June 2025

For the attention of Ms Rachel Richardson (by email to rachel.richardson@midsussex.gov.uk)

Dear Sirs

DM/25/1467

LAND AT OLD VICARAGE FIELD AND THE OLD ESTATE YARD, CHURCH ROAD, TURNERS HILL, WEST SUSSEX

We are writing to express our objections to the development proposals submitted to you under the above-mentioned reference.

We are the owner occupiers of Grove Cottage, Church Road, Turners Hill. Our property sits on the fork between Church Road (to the north) and Paddockhurst Road (to the south) and our driveway opens onto Church Road.

We are concerned that the proposed development would give rise to substantial detrimental effects by:

- Adding to the already heavy traffic using Church Road, Paddockhurst Road, and the cross roads at the centre of the village, with consequential detriments to all road users, as well as local residents, businesses and the village school;
- Placing additional demands on the local water supplies and waste water services, when these services are already inadequate to meet existing demands to a satisfactory standard;
- Necessitating the cutting back of the existing bank and the removal of long-established trees along Church Road to accommodate the proposed new access road and to provide the contemplated 'splays' (in order to provide adequate visibility to

drivers and to allow the construction of an extension to the existing footpath from the new access road up to the fire station); and

- Detracting substantially from the attractiveness of the appearance of the village when viewed from the north and from the south: the proposed development would sit on a high ridge, and the new buildings would be very prominently visible to anyone viewing or approaching the village from the north or the south; similarly, the new access road, and ancillary works on Church Road, would detract from the rural appearance of Church Road, and would make the new buildings prominently visible from Church Road.

We elaborate on these points below.

Effect on traffic

Additional cars using the roads

All the roads leading up to the main cross roads in Turners Hill Village are already very busy. The applicant's submissions (via Alpha Consultants) in relation to highways matters noted that there are already regular tailbacks on Paddockhurst Road and Church Road. Based on our experience, these routinely extend a substantial distance back along both Paddockhurst Road and Church Road, and effectively make it impossible for us to turn right, towards the village, by car during busy periods.

The applicant has suggested that any incremental problems caused by the proposed new development can be addressed by painting a 'keep clear' box on the road at the entrance to the proposed new access road, with wide splays to the new access road, to ensure that traffic wishing to turn from the southern side of the carriageway on Church Road into the access road will be able to do so without causing further tailbacks, and that cars entering or leaving the new access road will have good visibility of other traffic.

The problem with this proposed solution is that it does not recognise that the proposed development will itself significantly worsen already excessive traffic:

- The 40 proposed new dwellings are likely to lead to more than 40 extra cars wishing to access and leave the new development – some of them several times each day.
- The proposed community parking and third party deliveries to the new households will lead to additional cars and commercial vehicles using the new access road.
- The new keep clear signage will mean that existing tailbacks will extend further along Paddockhurst Road and Church Road.
- The proposed splays will enable drivers wishing to turn into the new access road from Church Road to see that it is unsafe to do so, when their access is blocked by a car waiting to leave the new estate, but that will simply mean that drivers have to wait longer to turn into the new access road.

- In short, the proposed new junction will both add to the volumes of traffic, and further slow down the progress of such traffic, along Church Road during busy periods.

The increased likelihood of congestion, and the addition of the proposed new junction to allow access from Church Road to the proposed development, is particularly unwelcome given the proximity of Turners Hill C of E Primary School on the south side of Church Road, almost directly opposite the proposed new access road. The additional congestion can only add to the pollution experienced by children at the school, the risks they will face in walking to and from the school each day, and the delays that parents will face in dropping children off at the school. (We would also point out that some of the plans and diagrams submitted as part of the application seem not to show the location of the school relative to the proposed development, so the effect on the school is not clearly disclosed.)

In short, we consider that the detrimental effect on local traffic conditions should prompt the planning authority to consider very thoroughly whether any proposal to allow new housing on the scale proposed on this site should be permitted. When it was first suggested in the Village Plan that the present site be zoned for substantial housing development, that was in a context where it was envisaged that substantial alterations could be made to the village centre junction, to simplify the movement of traffic around the village green. That proposal was rejected more recently, on the basis that larger vehicles would not be able to negotiate the tight angles involved at some points of on the new junction.

Since there is now no plan in prospect to mitigate the traffic congestion in the village centre, the rationale for allowing development on the present site has fallen away. Without a feasible plan to mitigate the traffic congestion, the site is manifestly unsuitable for large scale development.

Encouragement of other modes of travel etc.

The applicant makes reference to various factors that would, it is suggested, mitigate any increase in traffic on local roads. But none of these has any real prospect of achieving significant mitigation.

Cycling

It is suggested that new residents be encouraged to cycle rather than to drive. The local roads are unsafe for cyclists, owing to the narrowness of the carriageways, the multiplicity of potholes, the speed of vehicles using the roads, the steep and varied gradients, the numerous blind bends, combined with hedges that prevent drivers from seeing cyclists ahead on them, and the limited availability of laybys or grass verges to allow cyclists safely to pull off the roads.

For these reasons, very few local people routinely cycle to/from work or the like. The applicant mentions that there is a cycle shop in the village, but this should not be interpreted as evidence that residents are regular cyclists: the shop appears to draw custom from a much wider area. Indeed, during the summer, there are numerous organised cycling

events that pass along local roads, but these are often accompanied by prominent temporary signage, the provision of marshalls etc., to mitigate risks of accidents.

It would, in our submission be irresponsible to encourage new residents generally to cycle rather than drive on the local roads.

Buses

The applicant suggests that local buses will provide an alternative to private car use. However, the applicant exaggerates the running hours of the service, by suggesting that buses serve the village late into the evening. We attach copies of the timetables for the 84 and 271/272 bus routes which show that the 84 bus service does not run beyond the early evening, and that very few 271/272 services late in the evening extend to Turners Hill.

Nor are the buses sufficiently frequent to allow local residents to rely on them instead of a private car to travel at specific times for work or leisure purposes. At many times of the day there will, for example, be long gaps between buses from Three Bridges station to Turners Hill or vice versa.

We would also point out that Turners Hill is not served by buses at all on Sundays or public holidays, so the bus services provide no means of getting to or from work for those who work on Sundays or public holidays.

Furthermore, whilst the applicant makes reference to school buses serving some local schools, there is no school bus service to Oriel High School, though the applicant cites Oriel as a school which new residents' children may well attend. Children travelling to Oriel High School from the village would need to take a bus to Three Bridges station and then pick up a 100 bus.

Walking

Whilst the applicant proposes to provide an extended footpath along the north side of Church Road, from the proposed development into Turners Hill village, there will be no safe means of walking towards Pound Hill or Worth.

It is also questionable whether it would be sufficient for the developer to provide a footpath of the same width as existing footpaths: the existing footpaths are dangerously narrow in places (particularly outside the Old School House on the south side of Church Road), bearing in mind the numerous large trucks that use the road, and the regular transportation of substantial mobile homes along Church Road, which are so wide as to overhang the footpath.

We would point out that, in response to experience in 2024, when Tulley's Farm first hosted a Tulip Festival on a site a short distance from the village centre, the proprietors of Tulley's Farm made new arrangements in 2025 to provide a shuttle bus from Turners Hill village to the Festival site, so that pedestrian visitors would not be exposed to the dangers of walking from the village along Church Road and beyond. (Indeed, they also provided additional

buses from Three Bridges to the Festival site, presumably in part because of the inadequacy of the general bus service.)

Working from home/home shopping

The applicant suggests that, to avoid private car usage, new residents may order supermarket deliveries online. Such online shopping is likely to add to the traffic entering and leaving the new estate, as delivery vans will end up making separate trips to deliver to individual households at times of their choosing.

It is also suggested that a high speed internet connection will allow new residents to work online from home. Whilst this would no doubt be true for some residents, press commentary on home workers suggests that they often value home working because it allows them to carry out errands and other activities locally during the working day, to fit around their work, so home working is not a solution to private car usage.

It should also be borne in mind that many workers (including potentially those in the social housing element of the development) are unable to work from home, in light of the nature of their work.

In short, we submit that the applicant's submissions go no way towards addressing our concerns that the proposed new development would cause real detriment by its contribution to increased traffic on local roads.

Adverse effect on local water supply and waste water service standards

Church Road sits at the highest point in Turners Hill Village, and the village itself is built on the highest ridge between the north and south Downs. Given the inadequacy of South East Water's infrastructure and resources, we already experience low water pressure.

The overall water resources serving the area are tightly constrained. Within the last week, we have received notice from South East Water encouraging us to conserve water supplies, which are apparently significantly depleted even at this early stage in the summer season.

During recent years, we have also experienced several lengthy periods of interruption to our mains water supply. Regardless of the cause of individual interruptions, we have waited longer than other affected customers for a restoration of supply, because we are, in effect, at the end of the supply line, and, when the supply is restored, the water pressure is often restored at a reduced pressure.

In these circumstances, it is clear that the connection of 40 new domestic premises to the network can only lead to a substantial further detriment to the quality of water supply to other local users.

The waste water services provided by Southern Water are, we suspect, also inadequate to serve greater local demand. Whilst our waste water generally drains adequately, there are periods when waste water drains away so slowly at points in the village as to lead to its lying

in the pipes for too long, causing noticeable odours to be detectable locally. Again, we would expect these issues to become more serious if a substantial number of new domestic properties are connected to the system.

We note that the applicant's consultants, Abstract Consulting, have apparently consulted Southern Water about foul drainage from the site. It is intended that the proposed new homes should be connected to the public sewer and should discharge under gravity. For the reasons outlined above, we are doubtful whether this will be a satisfactory solution without substantial improvements to Southern Water's relevant infrastructure.

It is not clear to us whether the applicant or the planning authority has consulted South East Water in relation to the capacity of the mains water supply system. Whilst South East Water will presumably have an obligation to supply any new households, it is questionable whether it will be able to expand its reservoir capacity and reinforce its network adequately to meet those obligations within a reasonable time period.

Adverse effects on visual amenity of the area

Works on Church Road

The proposed development will entail cutting a substantial new road access into the bank that runs along the north side of Church Road, with further interference with the bank to create splays on each side of the new access road.

Further cutting back of the bank, and the weathered stone retaining wall, may be necessary to provide the contemplated extension to the footpath into the village.

All this interference with the bank will remove a substantial stretch of well-established greenery along the northern side of Church Road.

We are concerned that it will also necessitate the removal of substantial trees that stand above the bank, as their root systems are likely to be substantially damaged or exposed by the interference with the bank.

We note that the report submitted by Barrell Consultancy which suggests otherwise is expressed in very general terms (talking about the removal of low quality trees etc.) but the schedule of trees likely to be affected at Appendix 2 is quite extensive.

Nor is it clear whether the illustrative 'street scene' diagrams submitted by the applicant, which show the retention of trees along the north side of Church Road, take full account of the need to create adequate splays to the new access road and to accommodate the extension to the footpath towards the village centre.

We would urge the planning authority to investigate this matter more thoroughly.

The loss of substantial parts of the green bank, along with trees, and the opening up of the view into the new development via the new access road, would, we fear, make the new development very visually prominent, and detract from the visual amenity of Church Road.

All these features of the proposed development will cause substantial visual detriment very close to the centre of the village and within the village conservation area.

View of the proposed new development from the north

As noted above, the proposed development would be sited on a prominent point on the highest ridge between the north and south Downs. Since the land falls away from the proposed site to the north and to the south, the new development would be highly prominent to persons looking south from Crawley Down, and, potentially, towards Turners Hill from the south, and from Church Road itself.

We understand that the applicant proposes to build a variety of houses of different designs and external appearance (rather than, for example, adhering to a design based on the traditional red brick and hanging tiles which are more characteristic of the area).

The incongruity of the appearance of the new development in the context of the existing village landscape would detract substantially from the visual amenity of the area.

We do not consider that the applicant's rather unspecific proposals to plant new trees within the development will adequately address these detriments.

In light of the submissions detailed above, and of similar submissions made by other local residents in relation to some of the points we have raised, we consider that the planning authority should reject the present application or require it to be substantially altered to address these concerns.

Yours faithfully

Andrew McKnight

Elizabeth McKnight

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