

From: planninginfo@midsussex.gov.uk <planninginfo@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 16 April 2025 20:58:56 UTC+01:00
To: "Andy Watt" <andy.watt@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: Mid Sussex DC - Online Register - Comments for Planning Application
DM/25/0484

Comments summary

Dear Sir/Madam,

Planning Application comments have been made. A summary of the comments is provided below.

Comments were submitted at 16/04/2025 8:58 PM.

Application Summary

Address:	Site Of 60 Keymer Road Hassocks West Sussex BN6 8AR
Proposal:	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 improvements.
Case Officer:	Andrew Watt

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Customer Details

Address:	20 Friars Oak Road Hassocks
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Comments Details

Commenter Type:	Neighbour or general public
Stance:	Customer objects to the Planning Application
Reasons for comment:	
Comments:	The site and the principle of redevelopment

The site is located in the centre of Hassocks, on the prominent corner of Keymer Road and Dale Avenue. To the east of the site, a terrace of Victorian buildings with commercial activity at ground floor, and a mix of commercial and residential above, provide services and residential accommodation arranged over three floors. To the west, opposite to the site, Orion Parade is a three

storey 1970s development with purpose-built retail units at ground floor and maisonettes above face Keymer Road, and two storeys facing Dale Avenue. To the immediate north, the two storey dwellings of 1-4 Dale Avenue are contemporary with Orion Parade, and have small front gardens facing the street. The junction of Keymer Road with Dale Avenue is one of the busiest in the vicinity, however the wide pavements, the change in scale of the buildings from three storeys facing Keymer Road, to two storeys on Dale Avenue mark a transition between the commercial character of the "high street", to the suburban residential character of Dale Avenue. This is a positive and purposely designed element of the local urban grain. With regards to Orion Parade, the Hassocks Village Townscape Appraisal states "The late-20th century three-storey blocks of shops and flats at the corner of Dale Avenue do not positively contribute to local character, either in form or materials, but they present good massing to the roads, and provide busy local shops in a small area close to car parking".

The site itself is a single storey former garage, now in state of dereliction, surrounded by temporary metal fencing and overgrown weeds. It does not contribute to the aesthetic character of Hassocks, however its former use provided services, employment and activity to the centre of the village. The Hassocks Village Townscape Appraisal states "Opposite Wilmington Close is the National Tyres garage. This does not positively contribute to a sense of place and its character, scale, form, colour and facing materials all undermine local distinctiveness. Its forecourt undermines the rhythm of the shop facades." The site is clearly within a sustainable location, and redevelopment to provide commercial activity at ground floor, plus improvements to the pavement and landscaping with residential above is in principle, welcomed.

Proposed Use and general landscaping

The application includes two commercial units on the ground floor facing Keymer Road; these appear to be able to be combined into one, and landscaping and steps John Saxby Place; the principle of these elements of the scheme would enhance the junction of Dale Avenue at pedestrian level and provide some welcome improvement to the village centre.

It is currently unclear as to the proposed tenure of the residential use of the building; while the site could provide much needed small units in the village centre, the application documents suggests that the units could be for over 55s and thus has designed the scheme to include a communal terrace, lounge and guest bedroom. This is explored further in the Planning Statement which explains that this type of residential use would be subject to viability. However, the inclusion of a lounge, communal terrace, guest suite, the number of units and parking spaces impacts directly to the design and scale of the building. There may be benefits to having such uses in a village centre location, but without being clear in the planning application, including in the

description (and fees), the local community cannot be certain if this specialised use warrants this scale of development in our village centre, and neither can the LPA decide in a transparent manner if this is a factor in the planning balance. The application is therefore premature and should be withdrawn to address this fundamental issue. I also further question whether the application description is accurate, and if the correct fee has been paid to the LPA to determine the application properly.

Impact on residential amenity

Adjacent to the site to the south is the two-storey terrace of 1-4 Dale Avenue. These dwellinghouses mark the beginning of the transition to a more suburban character area, away from the "high street" of Keymer Road. The proposed development includes four storeys adjacent to no 1 with numerous windows at first, second and third floor and a residential lounge directly adjacent at first floor to the private rear garden of the dwelling. This would be significant detrimental harm to the current amenity of the occupiers of no 1. Amenity is not only about outlook, but about activity, light, noise, smells and use; at first floor, a communal terrace and private terrace would be immediately adjacent at height to the boundary with no 1; at first, second and third floor, primary bedroom windows providing the only outlook to those rooms would overlook at close proximity the gardens of no 1-4 and the first floor rear windows of no.1. While the design references some obscuration of windows of the development, this is not clear on the plans and the impact would still be significant and detrimental. There does not appear to be sensible justification for this level of overlooking on private gardens. Cumulatively this would be a significant level of overlooking, noise, light and activity and would clearly not comply with the amenity objectives in DP29 Character and Design. In fact the relationship of the proposal with 1-4 Dale Avenue is so significantly poor, it is entirely possible that a reason for refusal could easily be sustained on residential amenity grounds alone.

On the topic of future residential amenity, over 50% of the units are single aspect, with nine looking out onto the narrowest part of John Saxby Place over a small terrace. This level of outlook would be poor for the future occupiers.

Height, scale, bulk, massing.

Most of the village centre comprises two and three storey buildings; these buildings also are one or two rooms deep, with pitched roofs and either hipped roofs or gable ends, meaning that the bulk and scale of development within the centre of Hassocks relates well to the pedestrian environment and village character and scale of the locality. Where development turns the corner into a residential street from the principle "high street" environment, typically it turns from three storeys into two or two and a half storeys with an upper storey set back behind a parapet. For example, the former post office at the junction with Downsview

Road transitions from three storeys at Keymer Road to two storeys with third set behind a parapet, or at Orion Parade where there are three storeys to Keymer Road and two on Dale Avenue. This creates a legible hierarchy of street network and development within Hassocks. The proposals would break this pattern of development by proposing four storeys on a prominent corner, and not stepping down to transition away from the principal thoroughfare. Crown roofs are also not features of Hassocks and only adds bulk to the upper storeys. This scale of development would be prominently visible on this junction, and be noticeable from numerous vantage points around the village. Together the bulk, height and scale of the development does not conform to the well-established pattern of development in Keymer Road and neighbouring streets. This would not comply with DP29 Character and Design. The NPPF requires design to be of a high standard, and it is clear from the above that it is not and should be refused.

Architectural design

In principle, a contemporary addition to the area could work well; the use of materials such as tile hanging and brick are local to the general Sussex area, but only if they are well detailed, using similar colours and textures found locally. For example, Keymer tiles are handmade orange Wealden clay tile - and Wealden red bricks should be used for the elevations. Dark red, black or grey (similar to those used at the Ockley Park development) are not appropriate for this location and jar visually with the areas' pallet of colour and texture. We therefore welcome the pallet of materials shown in the DAS. The drawings however lack detail of shopfronts, junctions and guttering, reveals and ridges meaning that the architectural details are rather conceptual than reality. The community is entitled to understand fully how the building will function and appear, and the current elevations area sadly lacking in detail. These architectural aspects cannot be dealt with "by condition" as they are fundamental to the appearance of the building. I am surprised at the Design Review Panels' conclusion of "skilfully executed" taking into account the issues of bulk and massing, and lack of integration with the local area as identified above. It feels as if the DRP have misread the locality of the site.

Community engagement

There appears to have been very little community engagement. The Planning Statement sets out pre-application engagement with local members and DRP, but does not show any recent meaningful engagement with local people in the form of exhibitions, leafleting, website information or social media. One leaflet was distributed over 4 years ago. This appears to fall short of the requirements in Mid Sussex's Statement of Community Involvement.

Affordable Housing & library relocation

I am disappointed that the application would not deliver any

affordable housing. This seems an unlikely conclusion taking into account the location, the brownfield use and the scale of development proposed. Please ensure this is verified by independent viability consultants. The Planning Statement also suggests that the library could be relocated here; while this could be a sensible use of these units as a village library, the application does not provide evidence of engagement with West Sussex County Council on this matter nor does it formally propose it; it is misleading to the community therefore to suggest that this could in theory, be part of the proposal, in both text and the visuals supplied. While it could be handled through a s106 clause, it is important to remember that this does not form part of the application currently and a wider consultation would be needed on this matter. Please do not allow your members to be hoodwinked into thinking this is part of the application when it is not.

Conclusion

The proposals are a disappointing attempt to regenerate this village centre site; there is some broad support locally for housing and commercial units on the former National Tyres Centre, however the proposals are too bulky, fail to respond appropriately to the hierarchy of development within the village centre, lack proper architectural detail and would severely compromise the amenity of 1-4 Dale Avenue. The application should be withdrawn or refused.

Kind regards