



Objection to Application DM/26/2054

Site: The Prince Albert, Copthorne Bank, Copthorne

Proposal: Sever land and erect two detached dwellings with associated access and parking.

Worth Parish Council strongly objects to this application for the following reasons:

1. Highway Safety and Inadequate Parking Provision

The proposal provides only two parking spaces per dwelling. Given that these are four-bedroom family homes with no garages, this level of parking provision is likely to be insufficient. Modern family households frequently own more than two vehicles, and there must also be consideration for visitors, tradespeople and delivery vehicles.

The submitted plans indicate that vehicles are expected to manoeuvre using parts of the neighbouring driveway in order to enter and leave in a forward gear. This arrangement is wholly dependent upon both driveways remaining unobstructed at all times. In reality, if either property has additional vehicles parked on site, visitors present, or delivery and service vehicles attending, these manoeuvres may not be possible.

Consequently, vehicles may be forced to reverse either into or out of Brookhill Road, creating a significant highway safety concern. Brookhill Road carries fast-moving traffic in both directions, visibility is already constrained by the curvature of the road, and the proposed access is located close to the junction with Dawn Rise. The combination of limited visibility, vehicle reversing movements and proximity to an existing junction creates an unacceptable risk to highway users.

Furthermore, the proposed access is located at one of the narrowest sections of Brookhill Road, adding to concerns regarding safe vehicle movements and access arrangements.

In addition to the highway safety concerns associated with vehicle movements, the proposal also raises significant pedestrian safety issues. The constrained nature of the access arrangements, combined with the likelihood that vehicles will be required to reverse when manoeuvring space is restricted, creates an increased risk of conflict with pedestrians using Brookhill Road and the nearby junction with Dawn Rise. Pedestrians, including children, older residents, dog walkers and those accessing nearby properties, may be less visible to drivers reversing from the site, particularly given the limited visibility caused by the road alignment. The narrow width of this section of Brookhill Road further reduces the margin for error and increases the potential for unsafe interactions between vehicles and pedestrians. The proposal therefore fails to demonstrate that safe and suitable access can be achieved for all users of the highway.

2. Loss of an Important Village Community Facility

The Prince Albert is a valued village public house and an important community asset. Its garden forms an integral part of the business, providing outdoor space for families, children and customers and contributing significantly to its attractiveness and viability.

Although the application does not propose the loss of the pub itself, the reduction of its garden space could adversely affect the attractiveness, functionality, viability and long-term operation of the business. The outdoor garden forms an important part of the facility, particularly for families and summer trade, and its loss should therefore be carefully weighed against the limited benefit of providing two additional dwellings.

The National Planning Policy Framework recognises public houses as important community facilities and states that planning decisions should "guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services" and should support the retention of community facilities that contribute to the sustainability of local communities. Public houses are specifically identified as community facilities deserving protection.

3. Unsuitable Location for Residential Development

The proposed dwellings would be positioned immediately adjacent to, and effectively within, the grounds of an active public house. This raises serious concerns regarding the suitability of the site as a residential environment.

Future occupiers would be exposed to noise and disturbance associated with normal pub operations, including customers using the garden, social activity, deliveries, servicing arrangements and evening use. Equally, the presence of residential properties in such close proximity creates the potential for future conflict between residents and the lawful operation of the public house.

The current use of this land as pub garden space is entirely compatible with the functioning of the public house and provides a valuable community amenity. Its conversion to residential development is neither the most appropriate nor the most sustainable use of the site.

Conflict Between Residential Development and the Existing Public House

The NPPF seeks to ensure that existing businesses and community facilities can continue to operate without unreasonable restrictions resulting from nearby residential development.

The proposed dwellings would be located immediately adjacent to an active public house, creating the potential for future conflicts arising from noise, customer activity, use of the beer garden, deliveries and servicing. Such conflicts could ultimately place pressure on the continued operation of the pub, contrary to the objective of supporting and protecting valued community facilities.

4. Impact on Character and Appearance of the Area

The proposed dwellings would be out of keeping with the established character of the surrounding area.

The immediate locality is characterised predominantly by houses which have a relatively modest scale and height. The introduction of two larger detached dwellings would appear incongruous within this context and would fail to respect the prevailing pattern of development.

In addition, the proposed houses would be positioned higher than neighbouring properties in Dawn Rise and those located at the upper end of Brookhill Road. Due to their elevated position at the top of the hill, the dwellings would be highly visible and visually prominent within the street scene and wider village setting.

5. Overbearing Development and Visual Prominence

The elevated location of the site makes it particularly sensitive to development. The scale, height and siting of the proposed houses would create an overbearing form of development that would have a significant visual impact on neighbouring properties and the character of the area.

Given the prominence of the site, any development should be carefully designed to integrate with the existing low-rise character of surrounding properties. The proposed dwellings fail to achieve this and would appear intrusive within the local landscape.

6. Cumulative Impact of Development

The village has already experienced significant residential growth in recent years, with additional sites identified that could deliver substantial numbers of new homes in the future.

In this context, the limited benefit of providing two additional dwellings must be carefully weighed against the permanent loss of part of an established village community facility. There is a clear distinction between accommodating necessary housing growth in appropriate locations and sacrificing part of a pub garden for development that appears poorly suited to its setting.

7. Previous Refusal

It is also notable that a previous application involving development within the pub garden was refused. The submission of the residential element as a separate application does not overcome the fundamental concerns regarding the loss of pub garden space, the impact on the continued operation and viability of the public house, highway safety issues, and the adverse effect on the character of the area.

In addition, the existing garden provides an important area of open green space that softens and enhances the appearance of the site and the wider street scene. It contributes positively to the semi-rural character of the locality, provides visual relief from built development, and forms an attractive setting for the public house. The loss of this green space should be afforded significant weight in the planning balance, as once developed its contribution to the character and attractiveness of the area cannot realistically be replaced. No equivalent substitute provision is proposed, and the

permanent erosion of this open space would result in a harmful urbanising effect that is out of keeping with the established character of the locality.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, namely:

Highway safety concerns and inadequate parking provision;

Unsafe access arrangements and vehicle manoeuvring requirements;

Loss of part of a valued village community facility;

Harm to the character and appearance of the area;

The overbearing and visually prominent nature of the development; and

The cumulative impact of further development within the village,

The application also fails to demonstrate that the loss of a substantial part of the pub garden will not harm the viability or attractiveness of The Prince Albert as a community facility. In the absence of such evidence, the Local Planning Authority cannot be satisfied that the development would not undermine the long-term sustainability of an established village asset.

Therefore, Worth Parish Council respectfully request that Mid Sussex District Council refuse planning permission for this application.