

Statement for Croudace Appeal : AP/23/0035

My name is Geoffrey Zeidler and I have been a resident in Albourne since 1997. I have been or am a member of the Parish Council; Church PCC; Primary School Governing Body; Albourne Village Show Committee; barman at the village's Pop-Up Pub; and am now the MSDC District Councillor for Downland Villages Ward in which Albourne and 6 other villages sit. I know the Community and speak here as a resident on their behalf in support of the Parish Council's submission.

Mid Sussex's Plan has a key objective of retaining the District's character described as "a good mix of large and smaller villages/hamlets... distinct communities with their own heritage, characteristics and aspirations for the future." Albourne Parish covers a wide rural area and in 2016 comprised 256 houses of which around 116 were in the village's built up area boundary. It outlined its character and aspirations in a Neighbourhood Plan to 2031 which anticipated building 34 houses across the Parish, and made its primary objective "retaining a Village Feel".

Halfway through this plan around 2/3 of these houses have been built; and planning approved (on appeal) for an 84 dwelling retirement home (with a shop for the Community) reluctantly accepted. This will mean that housing in the village of Albourne will double. Notwithstanding s106 promises, residents' experience of even this limited development has stretched existing infrastructure for sewage – new houses at Starley Close resulted in Butts Cottages finding raw sewage in their houses; for roads - traffic on the Henfield Road is causing measurable vibration damage to housing and it can now take residents 5 minutes to get out of their drive on London Road; or for water - in the wettest summer in recent history there has been a 6 week hose-pipe ban. It also challenges the community's ability to maintain cohesion and retain a "Village Feel" having to engage so many new residents when the Village Hall is no longer big enough.

Albourne residents have been used to incessant development proposals over the last 10 years but have worked with the District Council in its difficult decisions as to where to build to meet Government targets. This includes the Councils' draft District Plan and its 2,000 home "Sayers Village" (wholly situated in Albourne Parish) which, whilst not welcomed, will at least be designed to avoid coalescence with Albourne and provide significant infrastructure benefits. In contrast, this Croudace proposal would lead to a disproportionate tripling of the size of Albourne village in a short number of years; and offers only loss of amenity and infrastructure stress without useful benefits to the Village, the Council, or prospective inhabitants of Mid Sussex.

Residents also believe that this development would fundamentally change the "village feel" – the primary objective of the Neighbourhood Plan, both through its scale; and its impact on the rural setting.

The fields and associated PRoWs to the east of Albourne are the closest access to open countryside for village residents. They offer level walking for older residents and are less prone to mud than footpaths to the south. This development would change the immediate sense of walking out into open fields with all-round views (although now slightly restricted by recent planting) to one of walking along the edge of a town with associated streetlighting and boundary vegetation. The effect on the Primary school would be even greater as its longest countryside boundary would be lost. At

present there is the sense that the school is truly rural with an inspiring open environment and sundown views to the west in the spring evenings. My children went there and I believe this helps build a real love of the countryside in pupils when they are at their most receptive. Unfortunately, this development would change that perspective to one of being part of a town with a view at the far end of the playground.

I believe that this application shows how the current Planning System fails residents by undervaluing community social cohesion. The site was rejected as part of the Council's considered Plan to meet the requirements of the District, developed in consultation with residents, and is now being opportunistically promoted on a technical argument over 5 year land supply.

This is to the real cost and anxiety of residents; unnecessarily heedless of the aspirations of the Neighbourhood Plan and not what the 2011 Localisation Act intended. Residents deserve better. There are not even any real benefits:

- a staffed Community Shop is already planned at the new retirement home.
- the school is not operating at capacity and does not require additional land
- residents already have access to the proposed "public space" as landscape and PRow which is farmed consistent with the rural nature of the area; and management cost of the proposed space may be a burden.

I hope that the proposal can be dismissed at as early a stage as possible to reduce the costs to taxpayers and distraction to this Council which is trying to finalise its properly considered Plan for the whole District working with the Parishes.

Albourne is a small community with a historic, village feel – exemplary of the Mid Sussex character (with an imminent retirement home). It does not wish, or need to be; and should not be forced to be, a large dormitory village.