

Outline (Access not reserved) - Proposed erection of up to 24 dwellings to include garaging, parking provision, improvements to existing vehicular access, landscaping and other ancillary works

Former Site Of Springfield Nurseries, Cranbrook Road, Hawkhurst

Hawkhurst Parish Council (HPC) maintains its objection to this application and would like to make the following additional comments.

We note that the appeal paperwork emphasises that TWBC/KCC Highways did not object to this application on the grounds of the impact on the crossroads. This junction is already over capacity and has been for several years. The Parish Council believes that planning decisions are being made without appropriate consideration of the residual cumulative impact on this junction by either TWBC or KCC Highways. Our concerns are such that we have applied for a Judicial Review of a recent decision by TWBC. The court granted permission to proceed with the Judicial Review on 17th March 2020.

The level of congestion at the crossroads is accepted by TWBC and KCC Highways. Indeed, in advice given to KCC by Christopher Lockhart-Mummery QC of Landmark Chambers in July 2019, the crossroads is described as "experiencing severe levels of congestion". The Parish Council's view is that no further development should be permitted without the cumulative impact on the crossroads being properly assessed. To date this has not been done. When responding to recent planning applications in Hawkhurst, KCC Highways has indicated that the cumulative impact of small-scale developments on the Hawkhurst crossroads is "difficult to address" until the Local Plan process is further advanced. This is not acceptable. In the advice referred to above, Christopher Lockhart-Mummery QC states that the view that "it is the cumulative impact that is critical and this should be assessed when a proposal is considered together with other committed developments. Therefore, in the Tunbridge Wells scenario, there are very valid reasons for the County Council, as local highway authority, to object to these proposals" is entirely correct. This advice was sought in relation to the numerous (generally small-scale) applications for housing in Hawkhurst. To date, it would appear that this advice has not been followed.

Following discussions between KCC Highways, TWBC and HPC, KCC Highways have recently proposed (March 2020) building a traffic model for the Hawkhurst crossroads to calculate the residual cumulative impact on development. Whilst HPC welcomes this, we are concerned that decisions such as this are being made without this information being available.

HPC also has significant concerns about the impact on air quality if this development were to go ahead. Monitoring of air quality in Hawkhurst has raised serious concerns over the level of air pollution, so much so that TWBC has added 5 further air quality monitoring sites in Hawkhurst to the existing site in Cranbrook Road. At present, we are waiting for TWBC to provide us with a report on the findings. HPC is extremely concerned about the impact on the health and wellbeing of our residents if this development goes ahead.

At the planning committee meeting, HPC also raised the following concerns: "We are not reassured by Southern Water's claim that they can provide foul sewage disposal. They are failing to do so currently and have no plans for expanding treatment facilities despite the repeated spills and the requirement to remove waste by tankers. We are concerned that this application is being recommend for approval despite TWBC's Landscape and Biodiversity Officer advising against approval. He has raised concerns about the impact on dormice, badgers, great crested newts and stated that this should not be left to reserved matters to resolve. Yet, that is what is being proposed."

Hawkhurst Parish Council shares KCC Highway's concerns over the safety of the access. The access to this site is on a busy A-road, with a record of excessive speeding. The A229 is part of the strategic road

network, being the designated HGV route between Maidstone and Hastings. As reported, there have been several incidents on this stretch of road. However, the data only relates to incidents where injuries have been recorded. This ignores all of incidents that don't get reported, for instance, only recently a car crashed into a streetlights on the Cranbrook Road. It seems likely that the danger to pedestrians is exacerbated by the fact that many residents of Cranbrook Road have to park on this busy road as there is no other parking available.

We fully support the Planning Committee's decision to refuse this application.