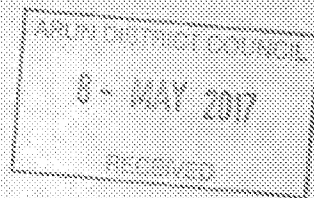


Mr D Easton
Case Officer
Planning Department
Arun Civic Centre
Maltravers Road
Littlehampton
BN17 5LF



"Brockburn"
Hurst Rd
East Preston
West Sussex
BN16 3AP

Application Ref: R/64/17/PL

07 May 2017

Re: Objection to St Mary's Close development proposal

Dear Mr Easton,

When we first turned into Hurst Road we knew it was the place where we wanted to live. We were immediately impressed with the neat and uncluttered road and the beautiful tree lined and well-maintained verges. We were also impressed that all the plots had wide frontages and each and every property was of unique design. The road had character, charm and an overall feeling of spaciousness. Luckily we liked the house we had come to view and we purchased it a couple of months later. That was 22 years ago and ever since we have felt blessed to be living in such an idyllic setting. Now we are faced with a proposal to shoe-horn 4 houses of similar design onto a plot directly opposite our house that will change the character of the road.

Hurst Road is not just a grouping of houses, it is truly a community. The residents all belong to the Hurst Road Association. We meet regularly and also have communal events such as summer barbecues and bonfire night celebrations. Although the other residents will have to speak for themselves, we can say there is unanimous shock, distress and opposition in the road to the proposal.

We find it most unfair that one person, in this case Michael Hartnett, can propose to visit such misfortune on everyone in a road and, as far as the residents are concerned, change the character of the road forever, making it a less attractive place to live in.

Unfortunately unfairness is not grounds for objection but we believe there are several other grounds for objection to this proposal.

1. Overbearing impact on neighbouring houses and the whole road:

- The proposed development will have a density of 17.4 dwellings per hectare. The average density of all the other plots in the road is 10.5 dwellings per hectare. The proposed development will be nearly double the average for the rest of the road.
- The average frontage for the proposed development will be 12.7 meters. The frontage of all the other plots in the road is on average 18.5 meters. So the plot width of each of the 4 houses in the proposal will on average be 1/3 narrower than the average for the rest of the road.
- Taking the measurements from the developer's street scene drawing (SS-01)⁽¹⁾ the distance between the eaves of the 4 houses will, on average, be approximately 1.6 meters. For the rest

of the road the average distance between eaves is roughly 4.8 meters. This means the distance between houses in the proposed development will be 3 times less than the rest of the road.

The **Local Plan - D SP1 Design** stipulates in various sections that all development proposals must consider density, scale and massing. Paragraph 13.2.11 states proposals should consider "The combined effect of the arrangement, volume and shape of a building or group of buildings in relation to other buildings and spaces i.e. its massing". And Paragraph 13.2.12 states "For development to be successfully integrated within the existing environment, scale is an important design element". And ".....the scale of new development should.....ensure the height and massing does not interrupt or debase the rhythm of an existing building/roof line and overall streetscape, or detract from the local and wider area's character."

The **Local Plan - D DM 1 Aspects of Design** says "Proposals should take into account the density of the site and its surroundings"

And the **Rustington neighbourhood plan. Policy 2 – Housing Design** states that "Development proposals.....will be supported, provided that their scale, density and massing reflects the historic character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape"

By any measure the proposed development fails to meet the criteria above. It will look like a cramped mini-estate in the middle of a spacious and generously proportioned road. It will be totally out of character and unsympathetic to the existing street scene.

Just for information, there is a restrictive covenant on St Mary's Close that only allows one dwelling to be built on the plot (in common with all the other houses in Hurst Road).

2. House design and materials:

The proposal is for 4 houses, 2 of one design and 2 of another. The developer has obviously recognised that all the rest of the houses in Hurst Road are unique in design and materials. He has made an attempt to reflect this in his proposal by cladding the house frontages with various materials.

But merely cladding the frontages of the proposed houses is not the same as building houses using different materials. In reality the 4 houses, even though they are of 2 different designs, will look very, very similar to each other and they will be in stark contrast to the genuinely unique look of the other houses in the road. This can be clearly seen in the developer's Local Precedent plan (LP-02) which not only shows the variety of houses in Hurst Road but also in nearby roads.

The proposal will therefore contravene several of the planning parameters below; which is a small sample of the statements we could have shown:

Arun District Plan 2003 - POLICY GEN 7 The Form of New Development states that "Development will be permitted provided it..... (ii) demonstrates that it responds positively to the identified characteristics and resources of the site."

Local Plan - D SP1 Design states that "All development proposals must consider its setting, materials, finish, architectural details and nearby habitats". Paragraph 13.2.2 says "The successful

introduction of new buildings relies on the use of materials and detailing.....ensuring that 'new' buildings are harmonious with their surroundings.

The **Rustington Neighbourhood Plan Policy 2 Housing Design** paragraph 4.12 states that "Development should not detract from the character and amenity of the nearby area"

Section 7 Paragraph 58 of the **National Planning Policy Framework** says that ".....decisions should aim to ensure that developments.....respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials"

Although Hurst Road is geographically within Character Area 7 it is most untypical of that area. The The Rustington Village Design Statement describes Area 7 as "characterised by mainly modern terraced housing with some pockets of social housing and pre-war development". This is clearly not a description of Hurst Road and I submit that Hurst Road has much more in common with Character Area 5, described as "This area is characterised by large detached houses and bungalows many contained in private estates" and "In the larger eastern area the absence of footpaths is a feature, road surfaces are a mix of concrete or tarmac and should be maintained to a high standard. Many of these are privately maintained."

We note that the proposed plan leaves some of the trees and vegetation at the front of plots 2 and 3 which may, depending on how much is retained, partially hide the worst excesses of the proposal. However, this vegetation is not protected and may be removed once the houses are occupied; so it cannot be claimed the vegetation will permanently soften the profile of the development.

3. The building line

The plans indicate that the developer wishes to site 2 detached garage blocks in front of the building line. Should this be allowed it will not only disrespect the current building line but it will also create a precedent that planning authorities, for years to come, will find it difficult to ignore. All the other plots in Hurst Road have restrictive covenants that say no built structures should be erected less than 9.1 meters from the road; and most are set back much further than that. Allowing these blocks will have a distinct impact on the current 'clean' lines in the eastern part of the road and will not be "harmonious with their surroundings" (**Local Plan - D SP1 Design Paragraph 13.2.2**).

4. Parking spaces

Plan SL-01 shows that the developer has allowed 15 parking places in total. This includes garage, car port and parking spaces and would seem to comply with the WSCC parking_demand_calculator.

However, it is my contention that many of these will not be used as only 8 spaces offer unfettered access to Hurst Road. Seven of the places, including all the garages, are 'blocked' by other spaces. In the case of plot 2 there are 3 parking spaces that are 'stacked' one in front of the other; so that to release a car from the garage the 2 cars parked in front will need to be moved first.

Additionally, a study conducted by the RAC in 2014 ⁽²⁾ found that "62% of motorists no longer use their garage" but the WSCC parking_demand_calculator does not seem to take this into account.

For both these reasons I believe, in reality, there will be insufficient usable parking for residents and visitors; much like the provision for the recent Churchfields and Langmead's Close developments.

This matters as the Hurst Road Association has a 'no parking on the road' policy⁽³⁾ which is well observed by all residents. The main consideration for the policy is the safety of the residents of Oakhurst Gardens, many of whom are elderly and some of whom use walking aids and mobility scooters. There are no pedestrian footways in Hurst Road so these residents have no option but to walk on the road itself. Negotiating parked cars would be hazardous for the elderly and infirm and would also be dangerous for them. It is not a viable option for such people to walk or 'scoot' on the verges, especially in the winter months, as this would be the least safe option.

In addition, the road is regularly used by the emergency services due to the demographic of the residents in Oakhurst Gardens. In the past there have been times where on-street parking has caused issues for ambulances trying to access Oakhurst Gardens; and at these times fire engines, often on emergency calls, would not have been able to gain access at all. The picture below, taken opposite the St Mary's plot, emphasises the need to keep the road as a no parking zone:



This picture was taken in 2012, before the "Private Road" signs were put up. A paramedic had to get out to guide the driver through. Luckily, in this case, it was not an emergency. Clearly a fire engine could not have passed.

5. Common ways and verge maintenance

The easterly entrance to the development serves plots 1-3 and becomes a common drive. It seems that the area between the common drive and the verge is also a common area. You can see from the extract from the HRA road policy below ⁽³⁾ that it is resident's responsibility to maintain the verge in Hurst Road. However, because plots 2 and 3 do not seem to extend to the verge it is not clear who will be responsible for verge maintenance in these cases.

6. Community consultation

In the letter that accompanied the developer's application (called "Letter Covering – Application & Planning Application" on the planning portal) reference was made to 2 consultation meetings. There were indeed 2 meetings but MJH Homes has completely misrepresented the views of the residents who attended. It is true that Mr Hartnett did take on board a couple of suggestions from the first meeting and made some changes to the plans as a result. However, the overwhelming view of the residents was that we strongly object to 4 houses on such a small plot and that the designs are homogenous, unlike the unique houses in the rest of the road. We did raise parking issues, as the letter says, but this was not the 'main issue'. In fact, at the beginning of the second meeting the HRA Treasurer introduced the meeting by telling Mr Hartnett that the road is unanimously opposed to the proposal on the grounds of density and design.

7. Alternative solution

We are not NIMBYs and we accept that at some point the St Mary's plot will be developed. At the consultation meetings Mr Hartnett was told, on many occasions, that many residents would accept a 3 house solution even though this would still represent higher density than the rest of the road.

We would support a 3 house solution if all the houses were of unique design, materials and height. Ideally, as is typical in the rest of the road, each plot would extend down to the verge and have its own entrance. This would create larger plots, enabling garage blocks to be moved behind the building line (or made integral) and allow the creation parking spaces that are not stacked and allow unfettered access to Hurst Road.

It would also reduce density and the massing effect, create more space between itself and neighbouring properties, especially L'Abri, and be in much closer harmony with the rest of the road.

8. Objection

It is clear that we object strongly to the proposal and, if the development is allowed, we will have to seriously consider whether we want to live right opposite it in the future. We sincerely hope that, for all the reasons given above, the application will be refused.

Yours sincerely



Mark & Marion Gilbert

- (1) The developer's drawing SS-01 is inconsistent with other drawings he has submitted in terms of measurement. It seems this, and the use of light shading on the left hand side of houses, is an attempt to exaggerate the distances between the 4 houses and make his proposal more appealing.
- (2) <https://www.rac.co.uk/press-centre/press-releases/is-this-the-end-of-the-road-for-the-domestic-garag?feed=Press-Releases>
- (3) Extract from the Hurst Road Association Road Policy:
- Vehicles owned by permanent residents, including all permanent members of households, should not park in the road at all, except in an emergency
 - Visitors, guests and tradesmen should be encouraged to park in driveways if it is at all possible and convenient to do so
 - If it is absolutely necessary for visitors etc to park in the road, residents should encourage drivers:
 - not to park any part of their vehicle on the grass verges AND
 - not to obstruct any other driveway such that neighbour's vehicles cannot be driven in or reversed out in an easy and safe manner. This would include parking opposite any driveways.
 - Residents are responsible for maintaining i.e. mowing, that part of the common grass verge which lies directly between their plot and the road itself.
 - If a resident cannot, for reasons of illness or infirmity, maintain the grass verge other residents of the road will undertake to maintain the verge on their behalf