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From: terence allen [REDACTED]
Sent: 05 December 2024 21:28
To: neighbourhood.planning
Subject: West Chiltington neighbourhood plan-residents comments

Draft Neighbourhood Plan West Chiltington

Comments submitted by Terence Allen

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2nd December 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to highlight two fundamental flaws with the proposed neighbourhood plan

The neighbourhood plan has been drafted by volunteer parish councillors who are residents of our parish and I acknowledge the time and energy put in by them. Indeed I regard the councillors as neighbours and friends. However the plan would have benefitted from professional oversight.

There are fundamental flaws with this plan which I have already put forward to the Parish Council and which were dismissed.

I was informed that the changes/revisions I proposed could not be considered because there is an urgency to implement the neighbourhood plan and protect the parish from opportunistic developers and uncontrolled development.

However the result has, firstly, been a failure to recognise the unique environmental pressures put on the parish and secondly a flawed selection process for selecting proposed sites for development.

Starting with a poor appreciation of how the parish sits within its surrounding and no assessment of how recent major changes to the landscape have impacted the parish and its environment.

West Chiltington has probably been impacted by the recent development of vineyards more than any other village in West Sussex. These vineyards have not only been developed within the parish but also land bordering the village within the boundaries of Nutbourne and Thakeham.

In recent years the north of the parish has been particularly impacted with the development of Knowtop farm as well as the former West Chiltington golf club comprising vineyards owned by Nyetimber.

At the centre of the village we have Southlands Valley vineyard. To the east of the village (within the parish of Thakeham we have Kinsbrook and to the south of the village (within the parish of Nutbourne) we have the Nutbourne vineyard.

It is acknowledged by the Viticulture industry itself that vineyards are a monoculture and their development of 100s of acres dramatically reduces biodiversity.

As a responsible company Nyetimber employ an offsetting policy whereby they sponsor the of planting of new trees within the Southdowns national park. However this does not repair the impact caused within the immediate vicinity.

There is as well a further issue of pest control and spraying. Responsible vineyards within the area put up signs cautioning when spraying is occurring. This can be a concern when one considers the problem of sprays drifting out of the boundaries onto neighbouring land.

Fortunately to the south of the former Knowtop farm there is currently a long margin of grazing land which acts as buffer between domestic homes and the vines.

This land which is home to numerous wild flowers offers a refuge for pollinators such as butterflies and moths.

Perversely this land known as Hatches estate is regarded by the parish council as dormant and is their number one site for any proposed future development.

Any change in its use for housing would remove this margin not only impacting pollinators but also would bring domestic homes up against boundary of the vineyard and their pest controlling activities.

Hatches Estate is land owned by West Sussex and we have a choice as to whether we protect pollinators and public health or not.

(A further point to note is the attraction of the area of West Chiltington as the site of further vineyards. There is speculation that land at Southlands Farm which is south facing would make an excellent vineyard.)

The selection of development sites for housing

West Chiltington parish councillors embarked on a process of evaluating the suitability of available development sites without any empirical vigour or consistency. This resulted in a ranking of suitability of sites that does not stand up to scrutiny and has seriously misled residents of West Chiltington.

Following a call for residents to come forward with sites which would be suitable for housing development the parish council were offered a total of 6 plots.

It was decided to evaluate each plot for their suitability.

The impact of developing each site was assessed for.

1. Visual impact
2. Traffic impact.

3.Sustainability.

4. Heritage.

5. HDC acceptability.

Each aspect was given a rating 1-5. The higher the impact the higher the score. Low scoring sites were deemed most suitable.

The task of assessing these sites was given to parish councillors.

The results were wildly inconstant and confused and lacked any benchmark.

An example of this would be the assessment of **Hatches estate** and **Land east of Hatches House**.

Both plots are sited next door to grade 2 listed buildings. Yet when ranked for impact on heritage, Hatches Estate was ranked as 1, (low impact) yet the impact on Land East of Hatches House was ranked as 4 (high).

Another example would comparing sites **Hatches Estate** and The **Paddocks** , for traffic impact.

Hatches estate site would currently be approached on a hill with a blind bend and rated 2 for impact, yet the **Paddocks** which is on a straight piece of road was ranked 3 for impact.

The resulting totals ranked Hatches Estate as low for impact and therefore the number one choice for development.

This iniquity was compounded even further when the final results of the selection process were made available to West Chiltington residents for comment.

The emailed document to residents featured ,in full, plans and a description of the two favoured sites, the remaining four sites were just listed as a description only.

For the residents to make an informed decision all six sites should have had their plans available for scrutiny.

It appeared to residents a forgone conclusion.

I brought my concerns to the attention of the next planning meeting of the West Chiltington Parish Council. I asked for an explanation for the inconsistencies in the grading. I was told by a councillor that the inspection of the sites was conducted during COVID and it was not possible for everyone to meet up as they had wished. They were not prepared to review their decisions as they had to get the Neighbourhood Plan implemented quickly.

I thank you considering this matter

