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Agenda item

DM/23/2866 - Land East of Ansty Way, Cuckfield Bypass,

Cuckfield, West Sussex.

- [Meeting of District Planning Committee, Thursday, 16th October, 2025 2.00 pm \(Item 5.\)_\(ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=138&MID=3362#A16834\)](#)

Minutes:

Before introducing the application, Steve Ashdown, Head of Development Management, drew Members attention to the Agenda Update sheet, including an update to the recommendation, additional representations and updates to the report specifically regarding para 189 of the NPPF and the conditions.

The application is seeking outline planning permission (with all matters reserved apart from access) for the development of the site for up to 1,450 homes (including 30% affordable housing) up to 90 residential care units, a primary school, Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) school, health club, sports facilities, allotments, retail, community and employment uses together with ancillary and associated development. This would include pedestrian/cycle routes, open space and three new vehicular access points from the existing road network.

The site consists of arable farmland, woodland and waterways. There are two listed buildings located in the centre of the site, but outside the site boundary.

The mix of dwelling would be determined at the reserved matters stage, however the application states it would incorporate a range of dwellings including flats and houses between 1.5 storeys and 4 storeys in height.

The application is not subject to the 10% biodiversity net gain as this was introduced after the application was submitted. The MSDC Tree officer has raised objections due to the excessive loss of trees and future pressure on ancient woodland conflicting with policy DP37 of the District Plan. WSCC Highways raised no objections subject to the s106 requirements and conditions. WSCC Education have reviewed the application and recommend it for refusal due to unresolved design and legal issues affecting the proposed primary and SEND school sites.

He concluded that while the report sets out how the proposals comply with a number of the Development Plan policies, it is also a major development on an unallocated site within the countryside and therefore conflicts with the Development Plan when read as a whole. However, consideration needs to be given to other material impacts. The NPPF is a material consideration and para 11 is of particular importance. Given the Council is unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites, some policies are outdated when considering this application. Officers have considered the application and assessed the issues identified as either severe, moderate and limited. In conclusion, they do not consider the adverse impacts to outweigh the recommendations.

Councillor Simon Stokes, Chair of Ansty & Staplefield Parish Council spoke against the application.

Councillor Steve Oversby-Powell, Cuckfield Parish Council, spoke against the application.

Giles King, Chairman of Cuckfield Society, spoke against the application.

Michael Brown, CPRE Sussex, spoke against the application.

David Howson, Ardent, spoke in favour of the application.

Steven Brown, Woolf Bond Planning, spoke in favour of the application.

Councillor Knight, Ward Member, spoke against the application.

The Head of Development Management, reiterated following the speeches, that the tilted balance was engaged as referenced by para 12.90 of the NPPF; 'The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas'. He recognised the site would not immediately contribute to the 5-year housing land supply, however, this was a rolling supply and should the site be approved, the figure would contribute towards the housing need and be included in the overall numbers required. He noted South East Water were consulted on the application but had not provided any comments.

Members discussed the impact the application would have on Cuckfield, Ansty and the surrounding areas and understood the concerns of local residents. They noted the difficult position the Council were in, not having a robust District Plan and unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites. However, the site was not allocated under the current District Plan and there were far more suitable and sustainable sites. Members discussed the policies relevant to this application emphasising that it contradicts many policies within the current District Plan including; DP6 Settlement Hierarchy, DP12 Protecting and Enhancing of Countryside, DP13 Preventing Coalescence, DP16 Local Plan, DP34 and DP35 Listed Buildings, other Heritage assets and Conservation Areas. They noted the clear view from the site through to Cuckfield Church which was not protected. In relation to para 189 of the NPPF, the development is not sensitively located. Members discussed DP21 Transport and the lack of public transport and infrastructure to accommodate and support such a large-scale development. Members agreed it was not a sustainable development as it would be predominately car dependent, increasing congestion of surrounding areas. Improvements are proposed to the A272, however, only to accommodate this application. Stephen Gee, WSCC Highways confirmed there were no substantive improvements planned to the road network, however it had passed the road safety audit. He noted the additional bus services proposed would be for up to two years post completion which would be assessed if needed.

A Member flagged concerns that WSCC Education had recommended the application be refused and therefore the lack of educational facilities in the area for the increase in population. This was evidenced by similar developments in the

area stalling educational facilities due to various issues.

There were also concerns regarding the cycle path proposed for an already narrow and congested road. Stephen Gee confirmed the cycle path would be confirmed at the reserved matters stage and improvements would be made to the necessary junctions to mitigate some of the issues.

A Member expressed concerns that the main issues of this development would be the impact on the rural landscape and High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the coalescence between Ansty and Cuckfield. Noting the development would result in irreversible change as confirmed by the MSDC Visual Landscape Consultant which would be significant and adverse. He also raised concerns regarding the number of heritage assets adjacent to the site.

In response to Member comments, the Head of Development Management, emphasised the report acknowledges the policies that have not been met and these are dealt with in the report. He clarified the delivery of the primary school would be secured and delivered by the s106 developer contributions along with the other proposed facilities such as healthcare, making the site sustainable. The SEND school application was speculative at this stage.

As there were no further comments, the Chairman sensing the majority of Members were objecting to the recommendations, asked for a proposer and a seconder. Councillor Eves proposed a motion to reject the recommendations and refuse the application, which was seconded by Councillor Berggreen. The reasons being the application does not comply with the following regulations; para 189 and 187 of the NPPF, DP12, CNP5, NPPF 8, DP6, DP13, DP15, DP16, DP21, DP37 concluding the harm caused would be more than significant.

The Chairman, Vice Chairman and officers adjourned at 3.57pm to consider the reasons for refusal and returned to the Chamber at 4.10pm.

The Head of Development Management, stated there were three substantive reasons for refusing the application. These were relating to;

1. Major development in the countryside and the impact on the rural landscape, the extension of the built-up area of Ansty and coalescence with Cuckfield, loss of trees eroding the rural nature of the site.
2. Unacceptable location scale of the development and urbanizing impact on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and therefore para 89 of the NPPF is not complied with and the tilted balance is not engaged and does not comply with the Development Plan.
3. Securing of the affordable housing contributions as part of the S106 should the application go to appeal. However, should the S106 agreement be agreed as part of the appeal process, this would be redundant. Officers would agree the precise wording to ensure legal implications were correct.

Following this, the Chairman took Members to a vote on the motion to reject the officer recommendations and refuse the application for the reasons laid out by the Head of Development Management. The motion was proposed by Councillor Eves and seconded by Councillor Berggreen, with 8 votes in favour and 4 against.

RESOLVED

It was resolved to reject the officer recommendations and refuse the application for the following reasons;

1. Major development in the countryside and the impact on the rural landscape, the extension of the built-up area of Ansty and coalescence with Cuckfield, loss of trees eroding the rural nature of the site.
2. Unacceptable location scale of the development and urbanizing impact on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and therefore para 89 of the NPPF is not complied with and the tilted balance is not engaged and does not

comply with the Development Plan.

3. Securing of the affordable housing contributions as part of the S106 should the application go to appeal. However, should the S106 agreement be agreed as part of the appeal process, this would be redundant. Officers would agree the precise wording to ensure legal implications were correct.

The meeting adjourned at 4.16pm and resumed at 4.21pm.

Supporting documents:

- [Item 5 DM.23.2866 Land East of Ansty Way, Cuckfield Bypass, Cuckfield, West Sussex, item 5. !\[\]\(48a7667d09d5a06397e047ee4537bb6f_img.jpg\) PDF 876 KB \(documents/s22052/Item 5 DM.23.2866 Land East of Ansty Way Cuckfield Bypass Cuckfield West Sussex.pdf\)](#)