

24/01049/PIP – Land at Old Pines House, Ball Hill, RG20 ONU.

The Planning Committee of East Woodhay Parish Council object to this application:

1. **It is contrary to the NPPF:** The location of the proposed development sits within a National Landscape (formerly an AONB). Paragraph 182 of the NPPF states *“Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty..... and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas....”*.

Building on another field and grubbing up a long established hedgerow will neither conserve nor enhance landscape, scenic beauty or wildlife.

Further, the proposal does not constitute sustainable development. The community is already a strong and vibrant one with a range of properties and social activities. In addition, given the location of the proposed development, any new residents will be reliant on cars for their daily needs; a bus service comprising 4 buses a day would not prevent such reliance.

2. **It is contrary to the Local Plan:** The proposal is contrary to Policy SD1 as it does not comply with other policies in the Local Plan. Neither does it comply with SS1 as it is sited in the countryside and does not meet the criteria set out in other policies to be located in the countryside; nor is it essential for it to be located in the countryside.

Further, the application entirely fails to meet any of the criteria set out in Policy SS6 - New Housing in the Countryside.

3. **It is contrary to the East Woodhay Neighbourhood Plan:** The application does not accord with the provisions of Policy HO2.

The Committee also wish to take issue with Planning Statement. Many of the statements made therein are either inaccurate or have not fully addressed the issue. The most relevant of these are:

a) **Planning Statement 2.4:** *“The site is situated outside of any defined Settlement Policy Boundary. It is therefore regarded as ‘countryside’ for planning purposes, albeit is read as part of the built-up area, with residential development seen a short distance to the south, east and west.”*

This is misleading. Having some houses in an area otherwise comprising fields does not make it ‘built up’. A quick look at a map or Google Earth would confirm this.

The site is most definitely in the countryside as it forms part of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (formerly North Wessex Downs AONB). It is also worth noting that Annex 2 of the NPPF (glossary) assigns as “Designated rural areas: National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and areas designated as ‘rural’ under Section 157 of the Housing Act 1985.”

b) **Planning Statement 2.8:** *“The site is situated within Flood Zone 1 according to the GOV.uk flood maps, meaning a low probability of flooding.”*

This may be the case for this site. What is not mentioned is that 6 of 16 RG20 ONU postcode addresses on the dropdown menu at <https://www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk> and, therefore, very close to or opposite the site, are noted as being at high risk of surface water flooding. Two further properties are noted as being at medium risk of surface water flooding.

Given the above information it is particularly important to consider the impact that building on this site might have on neighbouring properties; also bearing in mind that the area as a whole has a very high water table.

c) **Planning Statement 3.2:** *“It is noteworthy that outline planning permission was granted under Application No. 21/02329/OUT, for the erection of a single dwelling at Ball Hill Bakery in 2021 – a site that is positioned a short distance to the north of the Application Site.”*

Citing this application is not so noteworthy, as it involves the demolition of a derelict building – it does not involve building on undeveloped agricultural land.

d) **Planning Statement 5.7:** *“Policy SS6 sets out the criteria in which developments outside the Settlement Policy Boundaries must meet. Paragraph 4.77 within the supporting text states ‘The policy allows small-scale new residential development in the countryside in limited circumstances...it will be necessary for such developments to be well related to existing settlements and be suitably designed’.”*

The Applicant fails to note that Policy SS6 itself makes it clear that such developments should be agreed in consultation with the parish/town council. East Woodhay Parish Council awaits such consultation, but would make the point now that there is no identified need for such housing within the Parish.

e) **Planning Statement 5.15:** *“Paragraph 14 of the Framework is not applicable in this instance, as the East Woodhay Neighbourhood Plan does not contain policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement.”*

The East Woodhay Neighbourhood Plan does not contain policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement because there is no identified housing requirement. Paragraphs 10.7 and 10.8 of the Neighbourhood Plan make this abundantly clear; as agreed with Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council there is no requirement for East Woodhay to deliver further housing, having delivered more than 64 new houses against an agreed target of 10.

f) **Planning Statement 6.16:** *“Indeed, this is a predominantly residential area, and the proposed development will sit comfortably in this location.”*

As already pointed out, this is not a primarily residential area, it is primarily a rural one with a few houses; a glance at a map will confirm this. New housing will not sit comfortably in the location, but will fail to preserve or enhance the rural character.

g) **Planning Statement 6.10 / 6.11 Watermill Bridge:** Reference to the Watermill Bridge development is inappropriate, not least as the Watermill Bridge site does not sit within the National Landscape (AONB). The decision is, of course, awaiting the outcome of a judicial review.

It is accepted that each application must be considered on its own merits but the Committee would draw attention to application 23/01422/FUL – Slade Hill Cottage, Station Road, Woolton Hill. This has recently been refused for the following reasons:

“The proposed development would result in the erection of a house outside of the settlement policy boundary, thus falling within the countryside, for which no special circumstances apply when having regard to Policies SS1 and SS6 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan 2011-2029. The site is therefore not considered to represent sustainable development and as such would be considered isolated. As such, the proposal conflicts with Policies SD1, SS1 and SS6 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan 2011-2029 and Policy HO2 of the East Woodhay Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2029.”

It is contended that the same reasons apply to the site in question and in order to demonstrate consistency in decision making this application should also be refused.

As previously noted, the application site is in a National Landscape (AONB). The Committee is concerned that a decision maker on this application, or other similar applications, to justify accepting it as it is only, to quote a recent Inspector, a ‘small extension to the land’. The problem is that these individual ‘small extensions’ all slowly erode the countryside and add up to something quite significant. By way of example the Committee has viewed some 4-6 other applications (all PIPs), and all on similar ‘fields,’ in the Ball Hill area. Should these all be built there will be an additional c.16-24 new houses in the area, with no additional infrastructure provided and with an accumulated loss of countryside.

Conclusion:

For all of the above reasons it is respectfully requested that this application is refused.

Please advise the Parish Clerk should the matter be referred to the Development Control Committee as the Parish Council may wish to appoint a Councillor to attend.

Yours faithfully,

Planning Committee
East Woodhay Parish Council