



DETLING PARISH COUNCIL

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Ref: 26/500485/FULL

Address: Land At Hockers Farm Orchard View Detling Kent ME14 3BF

Proposal: Demolition of existing structures and erection of 25(no) dwellings and associated car ports and parking (with 40% affordable housing onsite), erection of 2-storey building to be used as children's nursery and associated parking, provision of open space, biodiversity net gain area and landscape buffering, and associated earthworks, with access from Orchard View.

Detling Parish Council has considered the application and objects to the proposal for the following reasons:

Environment

The site lies within the Kent Downs Natural Landscape and is recognised as a nationally important protected landscape; the proposed development threatens local biodiversity and risks damaging the flora and fauna which thrive in this area.

Any development proposals within the Kent Downs Natural Landscape should demonstrate the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment and scenic beauty. This application, if permitted, would result in the loss of the existing green space that currently forms part of the rural landscape and provides habitat for local wildlife. A development of this scale at this site would inevitably lead to the disruption of habitat and displacement of wildlife.

Detling Parish Council urges that consideration be given to the significant harm which the development would have on the local established the flora and fauna in the area.

Landscaping and ecology

The proposed planting scheme relies very heavily on unremarkable non-native trees and shrubs, including *Amelanchier lamarckii*, *Gisselinia littoralis*, *Hydrangea* spp., *Alnus incana*, *Viburnum tinus*, *Photinia 'Red Robin'*, *Escallonia rubra*, *Choisia tenata*, *Berberis* spp. And *Forsythia* spp., *Skimmia* spp. Such a sensitive location within the Kent Downs National Landscape and adjacent to several biodiversity hot spots with Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Local Wildlife Site (LWS) designations should utilise a far greater percentage of native and near native trees and shrubs.

The orchard planting is unhelpful in biodiversity terms relying on non-native fruit trees. The proposed ecological area and green space will give no cover or nesting niches for the wildlife which is abundant at this site. The simple vegetation structure is repeated in the large area of hay meadow shown within the ecology area. Hay meadows have a very limited resident fauna as the timing and severity of management interventions cut off most species in their prime. The green space and ecology area are more gardening than habitat creation.

A mosaic of habitats including woodland, scrub, grassland, wood piles and damp areas (all subject to a maintenance regime that leaves some areas of grassland uncut and undisturbed year-round on a rotational basis).

The ecology area is also shown as being fenced and without a hedgerow; this is a missed opportunity, as a native boundary hedgerow will provide shelter by reducing wind and evaporation impacts, creating habitat and vital cover for wildlife.

Biodiversity enhancements

There is no ecological impact document. The incorporation of sufficient integral bird and bat bricks should be negotiated.

Detling Parish Council is extremely concerned that the applicant has paid scant regard to ecological and biodiversity issues; the current application completely disregards the flora and fauna which is currently flourishing in the area.

There needs to be a robust biodiversity and ecological plan submitted before determination; currently, there is no plan.

SuDS

Two surface water attenuation basins are shown and there is no indication that these will comprise 'wet SuDS'.

Absence of Infrastructure

The proposal fails to meet the requirements for sustainable development set out in Chapter 9 of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), in particular paragraphs 115–117.

Detling does not have a regular bus service resulting in residents having to rely on their cars. There will be significant impacts from the development on the transport network in terms of capacity and congestion, as the local infrastructure is currently heavily congested; this in turn impacts on highway safety.

Public transport provision is inadequate with no rail or bus service to the village save for the school bus, for secondary children, and a shopper bus which runs twice a day during the week; neither service is beneficial to commuters or residents needing to access medical appointments.

The absence of services in the village means residents of the proposed development will be completely reliant on their cars. There is a small community store but this does not cater for families doing their weekly shop. There is no school provision in the village and with no safe walking route to the nearest school, parents and carers will again be heavily dependent on their cars to ensure that their primary aged child can get to school. The car journeys to local shops and school further add to the already congested roads.

The affordable housing element of this development is completely unsustainable as it has no realistic travel option for residents without a car. The residents here would effectively have to choose between being able to work or be housed. The non affluent non driver will be very much isolated in such accommodation or face a very long walk to a bus stop. This conflicts with the sustainable transport objectives and places future residents in inaccessible conditions, contrary to policy.

NPPF para 116 states: Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts

on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.

Detling Parish Council urges that consideration be given to the cumulative impact of these unsustainable characteristics.

Utilities

Detling is affected by electricity and water outages, the sewerage system currently does not have the capacity to serve the village currently with frequent spills into Monks Meadow and residents' gardens causing major health and safety issues within the village. The proposed development will further add to the pressure of these vital utilities.

Water is one of our most precious resources and it is essential for life, supporting health, agriculture, and the economy. It is vital for drinking, sanitation, agriculture, energy production, and industry. The fragility of South East Water's infrastructure has been exposed over the past year, with widespread supply failures affecting large parts of its network.

South East Water has informed neighbouring Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council: *"From our review of the latest housing forecast figures, we have identified that we cannot accommodate additional growth beyond what was assumed in our Water Resources Management Plan 2024 in areas where we do not have a supply-demand surplus."*

"Specifically, in the Tonbridge and Malling area, where we currently lack available headroom in our supplies, we would be unable to accommodate any growth exceeding our 2024 forecast assumptions throughout the entire planning period."

South East Water has also stated that *"The current supply-demand situation in our Tunbridge Wells, Maidstone and Cranbrook water resource zones is causing significant stress to our supply."*

The impact of this development will be detrimental to the utilities in the village.

Detling Parish Council urges that consideration be given to the insufficient utility provision in the parish which does not fully serve the current population and businesses.

Renewables

There is no energy statement; solar photovoltaic energy would be of great importance of within such an open and sunny site.

The proposed large units will have significant electricity requirements and Detling already suffers from power cuts, therefore, decentralised energy generation should be a priority.

Detling Parish Council urges that consideration be given to the insufficient utility provision in the parish which does not fully serve the current population and businesses.

Highway Safety

The proposed development will be accessed via a cul-de-sac road that currently serves a small number of residential properties and is unsuitable for the increased volume of traffic that will be generated from the additional houses and businesses.

The Council has serious concerns regarding congestion, turning movements, pedestrian safety and the overall suitability of the road network to safely accommodate the proposed level of activity.

The nursery is expected to accommodate up to 120 children together with approximately 25 members of staff. This would generate a significant amount of traffic movements, particularly

during morning drop-off and afternoon collection periods. These peak periods typically result in concentrated surges of vehicle arrivals and departures within short time will have an adverse impact on all residents in the village, especially those in Orchard View. There is no safe footpath to access the nursery from the car park.

Access and egress from the development will be through Orchard View, which is a small cul-de-sac, creating unacceptable levels of congestion in the area with a negative impact on the local road network.

The footway in Hockers Lane is narrow and uneven; it is frequently obstructed (including by waste bins), rendering it impassable for pushchairs and for people using mobility aids. Furthermore, there is no footway lighting in Detling and the additional vehicle movements from the site, especially during inclement weather and darker months, increases the risk of serious incidents involving pedestrians.

Detling Parish Council urges that consideration for pedestrian safety be paramount.

Scale and Density of Housing

The ten affordable houses will be in a line close to the boundary of the site. The ridge line is 9m and the houses will be overlooking properties in Orchard View.

Detling Parish Council requests that existing houses are protected from being overlooked.

Noise and Light Pollution

The development will increase noise and light pollution in the area. Construction will cause a significant amount of noise, dirt and vehicular movements which will impact greatly on local residents, especially those living in Orchard View and for those whose gardens back on to the farm. There will be more traffic, noise and air pollution during and after the build which will adversely affect residents' health and local wildlife.

Detling Parish Council requests that the application be rejected by the Committee.

Should the Committee be minded to approve this application, Detling Parish Council requests that the following conditions be in place:

- A travel plan for construction lorries to be stipulated
- No deliveries to be made during the hours of 7pm – 8am.
- No work to be carried out during the hours of 7pm – 8am.
- There be adequate contractor parking on site
- The developer shall fund and facilitate a Traffic Regulation Order consultation to introduce a 20mph speed limit on Hockers Lane, along with any signage and necessary traffic calming measures.
- No development shall commence until measures to secure safe and unobstructed pedestrian movement along Hockers Lane are agreed and implemented, in accordance with a scheme to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority..
- A sustainable transport contribution, including enhanced bus service provision for a minimum defined period, shall be secured through MBC and KCC.
- The sewerage system is upgraded to cope with the extra demand of this development
- The water and electricity network is upgraded to cope with the needs of the extra houses and businesses.