

BIGBURY PARISH COUNCIL

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Dear Planning Case Officers

**Planning Application 3450/19/ARM
Site at SX 663 471, St Ann's Chapel, Bigbury**

At a Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday December 11th 2019, Bigbury Parish Council reviewed this application and voted unanimously to object to this proposal.

In reaching this decision the Parish Council have taken into consideration the views expressed by the local electorate both at this meeting and an earlier public meeting convened to discuss this application specifically.

The application has been made by Grove Homes (Devon) Ltd for approval of reserved matters following outline approval, granted on appeal, for a residential development of circa 8 dwellings, open space and associated infrastructure with all matters reserved apart from access and associated highway works (Application Ref: 4097/16/OPA).

The details now submitted show a scheme for 9 x 4-bedroom dwellings with no affordable housing. The illustrative masterplan for the outline scheme previously showed 8 houses (1 x 5-bedrooms, 1 x 4 bedrooms and 6 x 3 bedrooms). There are now no affordable units and the ninth house is shown on land shown on the outline scheme as open space and allotments.

As this is a reserved matters application it is appreciated that we cannot object to the principle of a housing development on this site but nonetheless the details should accord with the description of the application, which includes the provision of open space, and with the general principles shown on the illustrative plan and the Design and Access Statement, submitted with the outline application. The proposed development also needs to accord with the detailed policies for new residential development set out in the Plymouth and West Devon Joint Local Plan and the Bigbury Neighbourhood Plan, which has now been through examination and therefore has significant weight.

Housing size and tenure

The proposed development does not provide a suitable mix of housing sizes, types and tenures that would be most appropriate in this area as required by Joint Local Plan Policy DEV 9: Meeting local housing need in the Thriving Towns and Villages Policy Area.

This policy seeks a mix of housing sizes, types and tenures appropriate to the area and as supported by local housing evidence. The most particular needs in the Thriving Towns and Villages Policy Area are:

- i. Homes that redress an imbalance within the existing housing stock.
- ii. Housing suitable for households with specific need.
- iii. Dwellings suited to younger people, working families and older people who wish to retain a sense of self-sufficiency.

The Bigbury Neighbourhood Plan showed that the greatest need within the parish was for small dwellings, particularly suitable for the elderly.

The policy does state that within rural areas all residential development of between 6 and 10 dwellings will provide an off-site commuted sum to deliver affordable housing to the equivalent of at least 30% of the total number of dwellings.

The outline application did show 30% affordable housing provided on site in the form of 3 x 3-bedroom terraced properties but the agreed Section 106 Agreement and appeal decision did state that off-site affordable housing contributions could be made. This will not however benefit the affordable housing needs of those living in the parish. It is affordable housing on site that we require.

Joint Local Plan Policy DEV9 also requires a mix of accessible housing units with at least 20% of units to meet national standards for accessibility and adaptability.

Scale and Design

We also wish to object on grounds of the size, scale and design of the houses. The details of the scheme should comply with the parameters which were set out in the Design and Access Statement (DAS) and as shown on the illustrative masterplan. In relation to scale, paragraph 3.3 the DAS states:

'The height of houses is proposed as 2 storey. This strategy seeks to complement the existing built context in the village and ensures the scheme sits comfortably in its wider setting.

Houses should be a maximum of 9m to ridgeline and a minimum height of 8m to ridgeline' Houses should be designed to a maximum width of 10m (wide frontage) and minimum of 4m. They should have a maximum depth (front façade to rear façade of dwelling) of 12m and a minimum of 4m (to be determined by location and frontage requirements).

We set out below the sizes of the houses which are now proposed:

- House Type A (4B7P) (semi-detached) has a height to the ridge of 12m, a frontage of 11.1m and depth of 13m.
- House Type B (4B8P) (detached) has a height to the ridge of 11m, a frontage of 19m and depth of 10m.
- House Type C (4B7P) (detached) has a height to the ridge of 10.2m and 11m to the top of the gable, a frontage of 19m and depth of 15.2m.
- House Type D (4B6P) (detached) has a height to the ridge of 10.2m, and 11m to the top of the gable, a width of 14.2m, and a depth of 15.3m.

All of these houses are considerably larger in scale than those shown on the outline scheme and they do not meet the parameters set out in the DAS. This should by itself be a reason to refuse the application.

The three new terraced properties shown on the frontage of the applicants Design and Access Statement (DAS) provide a good example of well-designed new dwellings. Perversely, in terms of design, the details in this application are very uninspiring and do not relate well to local vernacular set by the more traditional dwellings in the village. The roof pitches are much too high at 45 degrees and do not respect the roof pitches of the existing properties and the new properties shown on the front page of the DAS.

The proposals show grey cladding to plots 3 and 4 which is likely to be a Cedral type of cladding which is unacceptable in this location.

On other houses it is stated that there will be timber or slate cladding with slate roofs but no indication of whether this is natural timber or natural slate. All materials used should be natural materials which will match other materials used on the traditional properties in this village.

The proposed development by reason of the proposed density, height, scale and design of the proposed dwellings would not meet good standards of design, would be extremely dominant and intrusive in its townscape and landscape setting and does not have proper regard to the pattern of the local development, wider development context and surroundings in terms of style, local distinctiveness, scale, massing, height, density, materials and landscaping and character.

The proposed development would therefore be contrary to JLP Policy DEV10: Delivering high quality housing, Policy DEV20: Place shaping and the quality of the built environment, DEV23: Landscape character, DEV24 Undeveloped Coast and Heritage Coast, DEV25 Nationally protected landscapes and the Bigbury Neighbourhood Plan Policy BP7: General design principles for new development and Policy BP18: Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Car parking

Insufficient off street parking is provided to meet the needs of 9 x 4-bedroom dwellings. The proposals show mainly two car parking spaces per dwelling, often in tandem and in most cases car parking spaces are located in front of garages with the second space being within a garage which might be used for other general storage purposes and is therefore not normally considered as a car parking space.

The District Council's indicative parking provisions, set out in the table at para 8.7 of the District Council's Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2019, require 1 space per 1 bedroom dwelling, 2 spaces for 3 bedroom dwellings and 3 spaces for 4 bedroom dwellings. It states that the requirements set out in this table are indicative and that higher levels of parking may be required in rural areas, with additional parking for visitors, particularly where off street parking would have an impact on the highway. A higher number of parking spaces is also likely to be required in the South Hams area due to a greater reliance of residents and visitors on private cars.

The car parking standards set out at Policy BP 27 of the Bigbury Neighbourhood Plan, as recently approved by the Examiner, reflects this situation. The 2011 Census showed that 96% of households in the parish have access to one or more cars with 54% having two or more. The rate of car access in the parish is 1.74 cars/vans per household compared to 1.47 in the South Hams, 1.32 in Devon, and 1.16 in the UK.

The parking requirements set out in the Bigbury Neighbourhood Plan require one off-street parking space for units with 1 bedroom, a minimum of two off-street spaces for units of two bedrooms and three parking spaces for units of three or more bedrooms. Proposals for housing developments of three or more dwelling units should also, if possible, provide additional spaces for visitors.

The proposed development is therefore contrary to JLP Policy DEV10, the car parking requirements set out in the SPD 2019 and the Bigbury Neighbourhood Plan Policy BP27.

Location of additional dwelling

The additional (ninth dwelling) is located on land which was proposed to be kept open in order to provide an area of public open space, allotments and orchard. Apart from the loss of these open space facilities, referred to below, the siting of this dwelling will extend the built development further to the south of the village resulting in additional dominance and intrusion into the countryside and the area allocated as Undeveloped Land and Heritage Coast. The occupiers of this property will need to cross the new road to access the community facilities provided in the village resulting in additional pedestrian safety issues and the new vehicular access required for this additional dwelling will also cause traffic problems close to the junction of the new road and B3392.

This land should remain open as previously proposed.

The extension of the built development as shown on the drawings submitted as reserved matters would be contrary to policies for the protection of the landscape, the openness of the AONB and the undeveloped and unspoilt nature of the Undeveloped Coast and Heritage Coast contrary to JLP Policies DEV20: Place shaping and the quality of the built environment, Policy DEV 23: Landscape character, Policy DEV24 Undeveloped Coast and Heritage Coast, Policy DEV25: Nationally protected landscapes, and Bigbury Neighbourhood Plan Policy BP18: Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Lack of open space

The outline application was described as being for the residential development of circa 8 dwellings, open space and associated infrastructure. The DAS stated that the proposed development would include community allotments and car parking, community orchard and informal public open space – 0.67 hectares (1.66 acres).

The proposed scheme shows no open space, no allotments and no visitor car parking. The area shown as an orchard is also considerably smaller than the area shown for open space, allotments, orchard and parking on the outline scheme, about half of the area originally shown, with the other half now used for the ninth dwelling. A large part of this proposed orchard is shown for under-ground surface drainage so could not in any case be used for planting fruit trees. In addition there is no visitor parking provided for this area.

This does not accord with the description of the approved outline application and is also contrary to JLP Policy DEV1: Protecting health and amenity, Policy DEV10: Delivering high quality housing, and Bigbury Neighbourhood Plan Policy BP16: Open spaces and recreation, which requires a new area of public open space to be provided as part of any new development of 8 or more units.

Loss of hedgerows and insufficient replacement and mitigation measures

The proposed development shows the complete loss of existing hedgerows along the eastern boundary to the B3392 and the northern boundary to the C252 with insufficient replacement of these as previously proposed on the outline application. The proposed scheme also fails to show new hedgerows along the whole of the western boundary and the eastern and northern sides of the new road. The proposed roadway is also opened up/widened to include a new tarmacadam footpath and grass verge which is completely out of character with the narrow lanes with high hedge banks which are a feature of the local area.

The proposed development would therefore result in a significant loss of existing hedgerows with insufficient replacement and mitigation measures. It would be extremely harmful to the natural beauty and landscape of the area, to biodiversity and to the character and appearance of the AONB and the Undeveloped Coast and Heritage Coast.

The scheme would therefore be contrary to JLP Policies DEV20; Place shaping and the quality of the built environment, DEV23: Landscape character, DEV24 Undeveloped Coast and Heritage Coast, DEV25 Nationally protected landscapes and Bigbury Neighbourhood Plan policies, Policy BP7: General design principles for new development, Policy BP18: Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Policy BP19: Woodlands, trees, hedgerows and Devon banks, Policy BP20: Wildlife and Biodiversity, and Policy BP24: Transport and highways.

Bus laybys

We consider it to be completely unnecessary to have two bus laybys along the new road. The local public bus service is virtually non-existent (one bus per week!). The bus layby on the western side should be removed. People, particularly school children and getting on and off buses need to be close to the pavement and not to have to cross a road. The location of this bus stop also results in the loss of an important section of Devon hedge bank.

Impact on adjoining residential properties

The proposed development will clearly have a significantly harmful impact on adjoining residential properties by reason of harm to their outlook, potential noise and light pollution. We are particularly concerned about the siting and size of Units 1 and 2 which are semi-detached properties. These dwellings are the highest and the most dominant dwellings on the site and are located very close to properties on the north side of the C252. The location of these dwellings will have a serious impact on the outlook from these existing properties which currently benefit from open views of the countryside leading right down to the sea. We enclose a copy of 3D visual images of the before and after views from one of these properties. Whilst we accept that the planning system cannot protect private views we consider that this scheme will be unduly dominant and intrusive and will have a harmful effect on the outlook of the occupiers of these properties.

Light pollution

Condition 6 of the outline application requires a detailed outdoor lighting scheme to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The applicants have not submitted any details pursuant to this condition but do state in their Design and Access Statement that the main lit areas (potentially) will be along the new road highway areas. At the outline stage Bigbury Parish Council raised strong objection to the possibility of any street lighting provided along the new road as this parish is within an intrinsically dark environment. There is no street lighting along the B3392 or the C252 and there are strong policies to resist any street lighting for any new roads in the parish.

The provision of street lighting would therefore be contrary to Joint Local Plan Policy DEV2 and Bigbury Neighbourhood Plan Policy BP7 and AONB guidelines which emphasise that natural- nightscapes and dark skies are defining special qualities of the South Devon AONB: they are of natural, cultural and scenic importance. Experiencing these valuable qualities contributes to a sense of tranquillity and remoteness.

Capacity of local sewerage infrastructure

When the outline application was granted it was stated by South West Water that there would be capacity to enable this development to use the local sewage works. This development is however significantly larger than the scheme proposed at outline stage and other developments are now proposed in this area. The Parish Council question if there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the sewerage requirements of this much larger scheme?

Historic Environment

The Devon County Council Senior Environment Officer has stated that a programme of archaeological work is scheduled to be undertaken as condition 15 of the granted appeal. He comments as follows: 'No development shall take place until the applicants have secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out at all times in strict accordance with the approved scheme, or such other details as may be subsequently agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.'

The Devon County Council Senior Environment Officer then goes on to state that, to date, he is unaware that this pre-commencement condition has been discharged.

Sustainability and climate change

The applicants have provided no information with regard to sustainability measures including the need for an energy efficient scheme and possible use of renewable energy.

Electric charging points

Some of the proposed car parking spaces are some distance from the houses which they are intended to serve, in some cases crossing roads. Facilities need to be made for electric charging points for these car parking spaces.

Section 106 Contributions

We note that a Section 106 contribution will be required for the provision of affordable housing, previously to be provided on site, but consider that additional contributions will now be required for education and off site sport and recreation. The contributions set out in the Unilateral Undertaking were based on 8 much smaller dwellings.

Summary

The details shown in this application are clearly unacceptable in terms of the number and size of the properties proposed, the lack of open space, the insufficient amount of car parking, the poor design, overly dominant and intrusive appearance, insufficient landscaping, particularly in relation to the provision of Devon hedge banks to replace those lost and to provide sufficient screening to the development.

The proposed development should in our opinion now be regarded as a major development in the AONB. It does not accord with the policies set out in the South Devon AONB Management Plan. It is inappropriate development which provides no public benefit and will not serve local housing needs. The development will also fail to conserve or enhance the scenic beauty of this area.

The site is also within the South Devon Heritage Coast and Undeveloped Coast and the scheme and will have an extremely detrimental effect on the undeveloped and unspoilt character, appearance and tranquillity of the landscape.

The proposed development is far greater in scale than that shown in the outline planning application in terms of number of dwellings and the size, scale and type of dwellings now being proposed. It does not accord with the description of the development, the information set out in the original Planning Statement, the illustrative plans and description of the scheme as set out in the original Design and Access Statement (including the parameters set out at paragraph 3.3) and fails to comply with several design policies of the Joint Local Plan, the Supplementary Planning Document and the Bigbury Neighbourhood Plan.

Bigbury Parish Council trust that this application will be refused for the reasons set out above.

Yours sincerely

Mr R Matthews
Clerk – Bigbury Parish Council