

Kerr, Lucinda

From: matt smith [REDACTED]
Sent: 09 April 2019 21:59
To: Planning
Subject: Comments on planning application Y19/0248/FH - Duck Street
Attachments: Comments on Duck Street planning application Y19_0248_FH .docx

Dear sir / madam

I am a regular (weekly) visitor to Elham and in particular the locale of the proposed development in Duck Street (Y19/0248/FH). As such I attach my comments which I hope you will take into consideration when deciding this application.

Yours sincerely
Matthew Smith
[REDACTED]

Comments in respect of planning application Y19/0248/FH - Land Adj 1 Railway Cottages Duck Street Elham Canterbury Kent CT4 6TP

Location / Situation / AONB

Elham is a picturesque village within the Kent AONB. It is located on the west side of the Elham valley, with the Nail Bourne river at the bottom of the valley forming a natural boundary on its eastern edge.

The only development beyond this natural boundary was the old railway line and station, which was closed in 1947 with the tracks lifted in 1955 and subsequently redeveloped into the current houses situated on The Halt. Otherwise the area to the east side of the Nail Bourne remains farmland.

Unlike the development of The Halt which was brownfield land and which enhanced the overall AONB and Elham Valley by removing the old station complex, this proposed development on Duck Street requires the re-designation of farmland into residential land. It extends the village past its natural boundary, and commences development up the opposite side of the valley from the existing village. This will impact the natural views along the valley bottom as well as from the village looking east.

Allowing this proposed development would set a dangerous precedent which, at the very least, will cause further developmental pressure to expand the village to the east, and which will diminish and eventually destroy the character of Elham Valley.

Therefore this proposed development does not conserve or enhance the natural beauty of the Kent Downs AONB which is the primary purpose of the AONB designation. It runs contrary to the sustainable development principle SD3 where "changes to land use will be opposed where they disregard or run counter to the primary purpose of the Kent Downs AONB".

General impact on Elham village

The proposed development of 3 houses will have an impact on the village. The only reasonable route for traffic is along Duck Street and through the square, which is already overcrowded. This development will cause significant impact during the period of development, with traffic disruption and increased pollution from lorries delivering building material and carrying away rubbish. Post-completion, the proposed development could be reasonably expected to increase traffic by up to 12 vehicles based on family homes with assumed average 2 children, and the current (and increasing) propensity for young adults to remain resident with their parents for prolonged periods. This constitutes a material increase of traffic along Duck Street and through the square with corresponding impact on the local residents as well as the tourist visitors. The square and Duck Street are already unsuited for the current volume of traffic, given very bad sight lines from the square into Duck Street, as well as the volume of pedestrians using the square especially in the locale around the church, therefore this proposed development will have a negative impact.

In addition it should be noted that Elham village does not require additional development. There are no new or existing local employers requiring additional local based workforce, and over 10 thousand

houses are being built within 15-20 minute drive (Ashford and Canterbury). The infrastructure within Elham is also not suited for expansion, with traffic noted above, but also the single local primary school being oversubscribed recently by 175% (source KCC).

Specific impact on neighbouring residents

This proposed development will have a disastrous impact on the neighbouring residents of The Halt.

The houses on The Halt are situated at the bottom of the valley and have their rear gardens facing east. As such they have relatively low light levels compared to other areas in the village, or even compared to anywhere else. They only receive direct sunlight in the morning, being in shade for much of the day. The proposed development places 3 houses immediately behind the rear gardens of the properties on The Halt, and at a material higher elevation. The proposed development will substantially reduce the light levels for the existing properties. During early spring and late autumn the new houses will directly block sunlight from the existing houses as the sun tracks low across the horizon. This will lead to increased levels of damp (noting that at the valley bottom there is already a higher level of damp than elsewhere) and mould, and a corresponding faster deterioration of outbuildings and fences, and even the destruction of established garden plants which are only marginally surviving under current light levels / moisture conditions.

The existing properties on The Halt have small rear gardens, principally because they were a brownfield development which was not allowed to encroach onto the local farmland, and the small size of garden was mitigated by an outlook over the existing farmland. The placement of 3 houses immediately behind the rear gardens of the existing properties will destroy that outlook and remove the mitigation of small gardens. In essence, this proposed development will take the existing properties which are best characterised as edge-of-village individual character properties, and redefine them as the equivalent of being within the middle of a modern urban housing estate with rear gardens overlooked by other houses and a complete lack of privacy.

At present the properties of The Halt enjoy very low levels of noise, being shielded from the rest of the village on one side by trees adjoining the Nail Bourne, and on the other side by open grassland. This latter grassland will be replaced by a road, houses and gardens, with noise from cars, children playing on the road or in gardens, music and other sounds of general modern life. This will destroy the current tranquillity of the immediate environment, both during and after the development.

The impact on the health of the existing residents should not be underestimated. This is not a minor development with minimal impact to adjoining properties, rather the location of new houses behind the rear gardens of the existing properties on The Halt will completely destroy the ability of the existing residents to enjoy their properties (as outlined above). This will cause significant stress to the residents, along with the health implications of lower light levels and higher damp. In addition their properties will be blighted for many years to come (probably a decade), and this will have particular impact on those existing residents who have retired and are relying on their properties as a source of funds for old age care.

Flooding risk

The land of the proposed development is locally well known for flooding. It provides a soak up for run-off from the surrounding hills, thereby protecting nearby properties, but is also known to flood in correlation with rising water in the local bournes, thereby being one of a number of output points for local springs. The proposed development will largely cover this location by tarmac and concrete. This will likely have a negative impact on the existing local properties as the spring gets re-diverted into their perimeter and run-off is accelerated. The impact assessments provided in the planning application appear to have only looked at the flood risk maps which deal with the Nail Bourne in isolation, and have not considered the local flood history of the proposed development site at all.

Local wildlife

On the east boundary of the proposed development are a line of trees / hedgerow. These provide protection for a local badger sett(s) as outlined in the planning documents, as well as provide enrichment to the AONB including views of the village from the east.

This line of trees will be in close proximity to the proposed houses. Consideration should be made as to how this tree line will be impacted across future decades. The development will have an impact on the tree roots and their ability to absorb water from within the development boundary, but the trees may also have an impact on the houses in future years as they mature and grow. Placing a development so close to these trees will over time cause potential heave problems to either properties or outbuildings or fences. Additionally as these trees grow and mature they will severely restrict light levels to the proposed houses and gardens. It is not unlikely that future residents will attempt to have these trees removed either officially or “accidentally” have trees fall during “storms”. Thus the proposed development will increase the risk of a further negative impact to the AONB by its very location and design.

The assessment of the existing badger sett(s) was performed in early 2018. It should be noted that since that point this hedgerow has been aggressively cut back to maximise the development site.

The planning documents note a requirement for badger proof fencing and other associated elements to protect the environment. These should be formalised by a restricted covenant onto the proposed development land to ensure adherence in the future.

Other items

Development of this site has been previously proposed and rejected / withdrawn. All objections from previous proposals (including direct planning applications and consultations on local plans etc) should be carried forward and applied as objections to this application, as they substantially are still relevant and have merit.

The planning documents note existing mature trees in the gardens of the existing properties on The Halt. These are not dense leafy trees, rather they are silver birch or equivalent type trees which provide almost no visual shelter from the proposed development.