

Richardson Architecture Limited

The Round Barn
Gibraltar Farm
Wick Street
Firle Nr. Lewes
BN8 6NB

Tel: 01323 848781
Email: jim@rich-arch.co.uk
Web: www.rich-arch.co.uk

Our Ref: 444/2.1

29th May 2019

Planning Department
Wealden District Council
Council Offices
Vicarage Lane
Hailsham
BN27 2AX

For the Attention of Mr Stacey Robins

Dear Sirs,

WD/2019/0491/MAJ

**Land at Silver Birches, Street End Lane, Broad Oak, TN21 8TS
Erection of 6no. Private Dwellings and 4no. Affordable Flats**

Further to the submission of the above Planning Application and the process of Consultations that has been taking place, I wanted to write to you in order to clarify and counter a number of the objections raised with regard to this proposal.

Myself and the applicant attended the Parish Council meeting and spoke on behalf of the project. There were a number of objections raised at the meeting, and these have since been distributed to the local residents of Broad Oak. I disagree with numerous points within these objections and want to provide the reasoning behind our decisions.

As I am sure you know from our past planning applications, I fully commend and support the democratic route to arriving at a planning decision. The process of consultations raises many useful points from people who live near to the site, and can help to improve a scheme.

I also fully appreciate the concern raised by any planning application where change is to occur, and particularly within a sensitive AONB setting.

I have gone through the Consultations and objectors letters so far received and made my comments against the key issues below. Many of the letters refer to the same or very similar points, so I have commented on the more pertinent concerns.

The first list below relates to those Statutory Consultees who have so far responded.

ESCC Archaeology

They have recommended approval subject to Conditions. It should be noted that numerous objections and those at the Parish meeting related to this point. The response of the Statutory Body confirms that this is not an issue.

Environment Agency

They have objected due to non-mains drainage. The drainage design uses a system that we have implemented with success in previous projects. However, if there are better alternatives these will obviously be considered. One of the Parish Councillors also advised that they are a drainage specialist and had concerns. This aspect of the application will be revised to gain the support of the Environment Agency.

WDC Housing

They support the scheme for its Affordable element, which is suitably designed and located. The Affordable dwellings are not split away from the development and instead form an intrinsic part of the scheme.

Sussex Police

Support the scheme with some suggestions which we will consider including in any amendments.

ESCC Flood Risk Management

Objects due to lack of information. This is common, and relates largely to the fact that the technical information needed to confirm this is carried out at a later (Building Regulation) stage. It will be technically possible to deal with flood risk at that point.

ESCC Highways

No objection beyond minor concerns with the layout. We are in further consultation with ESCC Highways and their concerns will be remedied by minor adjustments to the parking layout.

Parish Council

Objected for the following reasons:

1. Out of character and over-development.
2. Traffic concerns and highways issues.
3. The development would set a precedent and is larger than the SHEELA allocation.
4. Inadequate infrastructure (schools, doctors and lack of employment).
5. Lack of attention given to archaeological interests on site.
6. Unsatisfactory arrangement for foul and surface water drainage.

1.) The proposal is not out of character with the surrounding area. We looked at local houses of architectural and historic merit when designing the scheme, and arrived at a proposal that was considered attractive at the Parish meeting. We intentionally did not follow the design cues of the more recent dwellings in Broad Oak, and instead used more traditional features and materials.

2.) The Traffic Concerns are raised in many of the letters of objection. The site is located on a very quiet lane, with excellent visibility splays from the access. An ex-ESCC Highways Officer provided a detailed Highways Report that confirms the scheme is safe and appropriate. The minor points raised by ESCC Highways in their response relate to issues on the actual site, and these will be remedied by small adjustments to the proposal.

3.) We have not made this application solely on the basis of the SHEELA Document, although it is clearly a positive sign that WDC suggests that the site is suitable for development. We are in fact basing the application on the Draft Wealden Plan that proposed 50 dwellings for Broad Oak in clusters of up to 10.

4.) There is not a lack of local infrastructure, services, schools or employment. We are extremely well catered for in the local area.

5.) The County Archaeologist supports the scheme, subject to Conditions.

6.) As mentioned above, we appreciate this concern and will revise the design to accommodate.

*Architecture • Interiors • Project Management • Landscape
Richardson Architecture Limited. Reg No. 6532677. Chairman: J Richardson. Director/Company Secretary: R Richardson
VAT No: 928 7081 96*

Registered Address: The Round Barn • Gibraltar Farm • Wick Street • Firle • BN8 6NB

Tel: 01323 848781 • Email: jim@rich-arch.co.uk • Web: www.rich-arch.co.uk

WDC Drainage

No objection, subject to Conditions after the approval confirming further details.

In addition to the Statutory Consultee responses, I have listed the key concerns raised in local letters of objection below.

The site lies within the AONB and is 'green-field'

The whole of Broad Oak lies within the AONB. Any of the 50 dwellings proposed by WDC will need to take account of this. There are no 'brown-field' sites large enough to accommodate the houses unless a useful existing employment or service site is demolished.

This site is set down a slope, hidden from local footpaths (a document within the application shows this) and has been carefully designed to nestle into the topography of the site, and appear attractively designed.

The road is not safe, and the site is opposite the school

We feel that the site is particularly well located, as it is opposite the school. Young families can walk to the school. The Highways Report, and ESCC Highways have no issues with the safety of the lane. The references to it being busy, relates to school drop off and pick up times. This is not an unsafe road. Many of our village schools are built on historic roads that have become dangerous over time (Hellingly, Punnetts Town, Five Ashes, Maynard's Green, etc), but this site is not placed on a main road or a rat-run. It is a very quiet country lane.

There will be increased traffic and light pollution

The site is located on a quiet lane, with very good access to the local shop and post office by foot, as well as the school. In terms of light pollution, the proposal does not have any external street lighting, and the new dwellings are traditional in design with fairly small areas of glazing. The existing and proposed planting will also help to screen lighting at night.

The design doesn't fit the local area

As mentioned above we specifically used existing attractive examples of historic cottages as the inspiration for the designs. The appearance of the scheme was well received at the Parish meeting, and noted in some of the letters sent in.

There is an issue with water supply

This appears to be an ongoing problem that needs resolution by the acting statutory body. The new houses use rain water collection tanks to reduce the need for watering of gardens.

It will destroy the tranquillity of the surroundings and not improve the local area

Good quality architecture enhances the surroundings. Look at Lewes, Alfriston, Mayfield and so on. The ecology of the site clearly needs to be considered, and this will be supported with additional hedging and more biodiversity.

There is a loss of amenity

This scheme causes no inter-looking or loss of privacy to existing houses. It is carefully arranged to sit well within the street and face the road and school.

As a general point I think it is important to state that these new dwellings are to support people who want to join the local community. We have numerous examples of residents of schemes we have built objecting to new projects we are later applying for.

It is an understandable reaction; to be concerned with change and that new building serves only the applicants and the developer. In this case, we were specifically asked to design smaller dwellings by the land owner, as a means of trying to assist in the housing stock. These are very much small family homes, with 40% of them being truly 'Affordable' via a housing association.

Architecture • Interiors • Project Management • Landscape
Richardson Architecture Limited. Reg No. 6532677. Chairman: J Richardson. Director/Company Secretary: R Richardson
VAT No: 928 7081 96

Registered Address: The Round Barn • Gibraltar Farm • Wick Street • Firle • BN8 6NB

Tel: 01323 848781 • Email: jim@rich-arch.co.uk • Web: www.rich-arch.co.uk

There will be considerable CIL funds generated via the project, that (in part) go directly back into the local community.

There is a significant need for lower cost local housing, and to let others enjoy what those who live in the area already benefit from.

We have tried to design a scheme that takes the lead from Wealdens need for housing, and to design a sympathetic and low impact series of dwellings, that over time will merge comfortably (and hopefully be an asset to) the village.

As mentioned earlier, I will be making some adjustments to the proposal to take account of the points raised in the consultations and objections, but will likely wait for all responses to be collated before doing so.

If you needed any further information in the meantime please let me know, and I hope you find the above useful in clarifying some of the point raised.

Many thanks.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Richardson', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

JIM RICHARDSON

BA (hons) First Class, DipArch, PG Dip (professional practice), ARB, RIBA

Director

Richardson Architecture Limited

Architecture • Interiors • Project Management • Landscape
Richardson Architecture Limited. Reg No. 6532677. Chairman: J Richardson. Director/Company Secretary: R Richardson
VAT No: 928 7081 96

Registered Address: The Round Barn • Gibraltar Farm • Wick Street • Firle • BN8 6NB

Tel: 01323 848781 • Email: jim@rich-arch.co.uk • Web: www.rich-arch.co.uk