

ASHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL CONSULTATION COMMENTS

TO:	Horsham District Council – Planning Dept
SITE ADDRESS:	Land To The West of Ashington CE School, Ashington
PROPOSAL:	Demolition of existing buildings and erection of 180 dwellings, sports pavilion, sport pitches and allotments; with associated access, landscaping, open space and infrastructure.
REFERENCE:	DC/23/0406
RECOMMENDATION:	OBJECTION
SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATION: Please find below, copy of the letter from Ashington Parish Council to Bellway Homes Limited (South London) following their publication of a "Community Update" leaflet in January 2024 and the subsequent attendance at Ashington Parish Council meeting on 11 th January 2024 of representatives from Bellway Homes and Savills.	

MAIN COMMENTS:



Ashington Parish Council

Clerk to the Parish Council: Lee English

Telephone: 07851 009655

Email: clerk@ashingtonpc.org.uk

1st February 2024

Attn: Michael Birch

Planning Manager, Bellway Homes Limited (South London)

Ref: DC/23/0406 Land West of Ashington School - Community Update, January 2024

Dear Michael,

Thank you for providing a copy of your "Community Update" leaflet that was delivered to some residents of the village in January 2024, setting out some key changes to your planning application. We are also grateful to yourself, Robert Steele and Matt Hoad for attending our parish council meeting on 11th January 2024. Ashington Parish Council has already submitted both to Bellway Homes, and Horsham District Council, an extensive list of concerns relating to this development. We are yet to receive any formal response to these. The concerns set out in our earlier representations remain extant.

You will be aware from the 40 plus residents that attended the parish council meeting in January, and the 196 plus representations made to Horsham District Council from village residents as well as your own consultation events, that the application in its current form is causing concern to the community. The vast majority of these concerns relate to deviations from the Ashington Neighbourhood Plan. Notwithstanding our previous comments, we make the following additional comments in response to your proposed key changes set out in your consultation document.

1. Removal of the grass football pitch. Policy ASH8 sets out the community

improvements to be delivered on each site identified in the neighbourhood plan and links to Policy ASH11. These clearly specify the community facilities to be provided on the Land West of Ashington School by direct provision on site:

- A full sized (11-a-side) grass football pitch for community use.
- A full sized (11-a-side floodlit Multi-Use Games Area primarily for football use.
- New allotments in addition to the retention of allotment facilities adjacent to Ashington School for school use.
- A sports pavilion, changing rooms and equipment storage facility.

In addition to the above, financial contributions are sought to develop facilities in the "Ashington Community Cluster":

- Improved and expanded play provision to fully address the needs of children of all ages.
- Improvements to the existing Multi-Use Games Area.
- Improvements to the drainage of existing grass sports pitches.
- A community building providing the following needs:
 - Hall and meeting facilities to serve the needs of Scouts, local youth club and other community clubs.
 - A parish council office.

Your proposal to remove the provision of a second playing pitch from your plans is therefore unacceptable and does not meet the requirements of ASH8 and ASH11. The suggestion that instead you could make contributions to improving existing pitches does not represent an “additional offer” as you suggest, it is already an existing requirement within policy ASH8. This therefore represents a significant loss of a community asset.

Your comment that it remains unfeasible to provide a second pitch, coupled with your observation that this is not influenced by the provision of 180 homes is odd. You also allude to the fact that you are proposing 180 homes on a smaller site than that identified in the Ashington Neighbourhood Plan which suggests you are increasing housing densities. However, despite developing less land than that made available, you remain unable to provide the community facilities required by the plan. Reducing the housing numbers to the 150 allocated within the plan will surely provide sufficient land for the required second pitch?

2. Improved Sports Pavilion. Sport England initially objected to your plan in July 2023 and significantly they objected to the two proposed pitches not being adjacent to the changing facilities on the grounds of safeguarding. Your response to remove the second pitch is unacceptable. The revised layout still separates the changing facility from the pitch and therefore does not fully address the safeguarding issues highlighted by Sport England.

We welcome the minor modifications to the proposed sports pavilion, however still have concerns over its location, size and layout and also how it will operate, particularly in relation to parking provision in the vicinity of the pavilion. Whilst we accept you have incorporated feedback from Sport England, the facility remains too small to be functional both in terms of the “club/committee room” space and the proposed “office” both of which limit its utility as a community asset. The pavilion does not address many of the key objectives of Policy ASH8 and ASH11.

The “club/committee” room space measures approx. 6m x 6m, with the useable space further reduced to approx. 4m x 6m by the doors to the store cupboards. With an office measuring 2.7m x 2.8m, both rooms appear inadequate in size. The changing room facilities are declared as being suitable for up to 40 people but provide less than 50cm per person of changing space. The club room would not be able to accommodate 40+ people or be suitable for the alternative community uses suggested by Sport England.

The provision of only 20 parking spaces is also considered inadequate. Given the proposed location, users have little option other than to access the facility by vehicle. Parking issues and conflict with future residents are therefore clearly foreseeable. The changing facilities have been designed with 40+ people in mind but the other facilities clearly have not considered these numbers.

As a result, we do not consider the proposed pavilion to be fit for purpose or designed with the policy outcomes of ASH11 in mind.

3. Mix of houses. Policy ASH1 which addresses the overall spatial strategy for Ashington provides for 225 dwellings in the period 2019 – 2031 and allocates two sites:

- a. **Chanctonbury Nursery** – Delivering approximately 75 dwellings
- b. **Land West of Ashington School** – Delivering approximately 150 dwellings

Since the Ashington Neighbourhood Plan was “made” in June 2021, planning approval was granted in September 2023 for 74 dwellings at Chanctonbury Nurseries (DC/22/0372) and therefore your proposed application for 180 dwellings exceeds the provision set out in the neighbourhood plan in total, and in relation to the allocated site. Whilst we note your comment “The site can comfortably accommodate 180 dwellings” this was not the conclusions reached and agreed with the residents of Ashington during the neighbourhood plan production.

Policy ASH11 sets out the requirement for the housing mix within the neighbourhood plan based on extensive consultation with the community and local planning authority. We would welcome you share your evidence from “local feedback” that suggests this is no longer valid?

4. Access. Your assurance in the leaflet that considerable care has been taken to design the access arrangements to ensure they are safe, fit for purpose and respectful of the setting is clearly not shared by many of the residents who have made objections, all of whom live in the village and are acutely aware of the existing traffic choke points and issues that will be compounded by your development.

Your road traffic assessment does not consider the access junction as a whole and traffic routes to it, and fails to take account of the impact on the existing Church Lane / Foster Lane junction. Your submissions to WSCC Highways department do not consider this issue. We would urge you to urgently review your site access provisions in accordance with Policy ASH11 and particularly considering Church Lane / Foster Lane is the principal walking route serving Ashington Primary School. We welcome the commitment given at the parish council meeting to review this and look forward to seeing the outcome of this review.

Ashington Parish Council therefore **objects** to your proposals and urges you to reconsider the policies set out in the Ashington Neighbourhood Plan, particularly, but not exclusively Policy ASH11.

Yours sincerely,
Lee English
Clerk to Ashington Parish Council

ANY RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS: N/A

NAME:

Lee English, Clerk to Ashington Parish Council

DATE:

1st February 2024