



Registered Charity No 305340

ASHINGTON COMMUNITY CENTRE TRUST

**Foster Lane, Ashington, Pulborough,
West Sussex, RH20 3PG**

www.ashingtoncc.org.uk

9th April 2025

Nicola Pettifer
Horsham District Council Planning Department
Chart Way
Horsham
West Sussex
H12 1RL

Your ref: DC/23/0406

Dear Nichola,

As Chair of the Ashington Community Centre Trust, I write in respect of the above planning application which was submitted on behalf of Bellway Homes (South London) Limited, to Horsham District Council (HDC) on the 3rd March, 2023 under application reference, DC/23/0406.

I refer in particular to the amended plans for the demolition of existing buildings and erection of 152 dwellings, all-weather sport pitch, sports pavilion and allotments; with associated access, landscaping, open space and infrastructure, submitted by Savills on the 7th March, 2025.

In that letter, Savills make reference to the following:-

In July 2024, the Parish Council raised the following objection regarding the scale of the 180 unit scheme being a; Significant contributory factor to the inability of the developer to be able to properly provide the associated community assets (sports pitches, pavilion etc) at a scale appropriate to the community need. The Parish also added that a reduction in housing numbers to the level specified in the Neighbourhood Plan (i.e. 150) would provide the necessary land to deliver the community assets appropriately. In October 2024, Bellway made revisions to the scheme in order to rectify these comments by providing the community assets to the north west of the site as sought by the NP allocation. Through further consultation with Sports England, the layout was adjusted to provide two football pitches (one grass pitch and one MUGA) to the west of the site, positioned alongside to each other. The size of the pavilion also increased in response to the comments raised.

Whilst we acknowledge that revisions have been made to the plans for the community assets to the north west of the site, we see no reference to any commitment to allocate funds for the enhancement and support of the main Community Cluster, which the Parish Council diligently researched and fastidiously articulated in Section 7 of the ANP.

Within this section, it was clearly stated 'that the Ashington village has a small, but significant number of community facilities. These are predominantly located around the Recreation Ground area and include a play area, skate park, multi-sports court, football pitches (adult and junior), sports pavilion, youth club (in the old village hall building), scout hall and community centre. However, over time there has been little improvement of many of these facilities, either in terms of their quality or their ability to support the growing population. The ANP offers the opportunity to ensure that the provision of community facilities serving Ashington are modern and properly reflect the needs of the growing community. In addition, this creates a related opportunity to create a 'Community Cluster' around the Recreation Ground area where all these facilities can be provided, and the community can congregate when using them. At present, Ashington lacks a physical heart to the village and the community has stated this is to its detriment, so the Community Cluster provides the opportunity to address this and create a central point where many of the village's activities will occur.'

The Ashington Community Centre Trust has worked very hard over the course of the last few years to maintain the facilities listed above. However, the financial climate, as demonstrated by the rising costs and overheads that we have experienced, has hardly been inductive towards expanding the facilities, and where we now have to allow for a substantial growth in the population of Ashington as a result of this development.

In the ANP, the Parish Council provided a table of the community facilities as depicted in the attached document. Herein, the second section entitled 'Ashington Community Cluster' specifically lists those items within the Infrastructure Facility, but they do not seem to have been catered for either in the original, nor the revised plans submitted by Bellway. We would, therefore, like to see a specific reference to these requirements and, to assist in the process, valuations have been sought from RICS qualified surveyors to provide the anticipated costs associated with these requirements. In addition, the detail of the requirements has been expanded upon.

These are as follows:-

- 1 Improved and expanded play provision to fully address the needs of children of all ages. This is to include a refurbishment of the existing under 12's playground and the provision of a second playground for children under the age of 8, together with specifically designed features for disabled children: [REDACTED]
- 2 Improvements to the existing Multi-Use Games Area: this is to upgrade it into a grade 3 or 4 MUGA facility as the current surface is in poor condition: [REDACTED]
- 3 Improvements to the drainage of the existing grass sports pitches. This includes the access to the grounds and the maintenance facilities, including the garage and sheds, which are in a parlous state of repair: [REDACTED]
- 4 A community building providing for the following needs:
 - a. An additional Hall and Meeting Facilities to serve the needs of the local community groups, including those who require small business units that are sufficiently flexible to address the needs of a range of different types of business, and
 - b. A Parish Council office: [REDACTED]

And in addition to the above:

- 5 Maintenance and refurbishment works on the existing Sports Pavilion which requires considerable enhancement: [REDACTED]; alternatively, a new Pavilion could be built.
- 6 Total refurbishment of the Youth Club and Sports Pavillion Car Parks: [REDACTED]

We realise that not all of these aims might be achievable and would depend on the funds becoming available, but we believe that it would be of assistance to all to identify the potential costs of the items originally identified in the ANP, such that priorities can then be established.

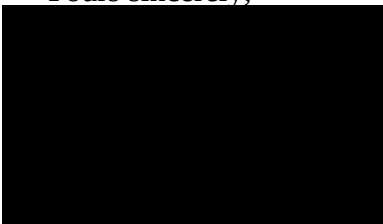
For example, the upgrade of the existing all-weather court/pitch into a floodlit MUGA, dedicated to sports uses (and large enough for football use), would create a winter training facility. The enhancement or replacement of the existing Sports Pavilion, adjacent to the Recreation Ground, where the majority of the football pitches and games activities would be continue to be located, could provide much needed modern changing rooms and storage space. The addition of a new playground for younger children and disabled children would be extremely welcome, especially when consideration is given to the number of young families who will move into the village.

As this proposed development is going to put substantial strain on the existing facilities, it is imperative that these enhancements are considered, as these sorts of amenities can really shape a community. The community spirit can be enhanced where all can be made to feel welcome, which such a development must surely seek to achieve. It can change strangers into neighbours, it can provide newcomers into the village with a sense of belonging. The right sort of design and environment can make people feel secure and enhance the whole nature of well being amongst the residents of the village.

It can make children feel more engaged and take them off the streets into safe environments, where parents feel comfortable about the safety of their children and realise that they have moved into a community which cares. The ANP, so painstakingly prepared by the Parish Council, clearly advocated this approach and the Ashington Community Centre Trust heartily endorse this.

It should also be recognised that these facilities require considerable ongoing maintenance and support, so with the arrival of so many more families, it is also imperative that funds are set provided for the future. A sum [REDACTED] is indicative of the costs and challenges that are faced over the course of the next five to ten years by the Ashington Community Centre Trust to ensure that we can continue to provide the level of care in the community that the residents of the village expect.

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular box redacting the signature of the Chair of the Ashington Community Centre Trust.

Chair
Ashington Community Centre Trust