

Extracts of Burwash: Save our Fields objection dated 3rd January 2021 with notes in red

Para 1

Anyone looking at Watercress Field could see it was not suitable for housing and the site was regularly rejected for development. The slope, the beauty and the name, Watercress Field, showed its unsuitability. Initially there was outline planning consent for 17 homes. **Then Russell Beswick, the developer, saw its unsuitability as a way to make money.** He put forward plans to build 30 homes and promised 40% of the homes would be 'affordable'. Rother District Council seized the chance to increase the homes built in the District and the number of affordable homes. They agreed to the outline planning permission.

Application made by Park Lane Homes (SE) Ltd not Russell Beswick personally.

Para 2

There were three problems with this. First, **Russell Beswick, never intended to build the affordable homes.** Second, the site had not been properly assessed by anyone except the developer, particularly for its inherent building problems and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) issue. Third, the site had never been, was not and never will be suitable for a housing estate. The fact that up to 30 homes were approved does not solve the problem of how to fit 30 houses onto the site without adversely impacting on the AONB and breaching other planning rules.

There is no evidence that there was ever an intention not to provide Affordable Housing. Park Lane Homes (SE) Ltd entered into S106 Planning Obligations for Application Nr RR/2011/2205/P (17 unit scheme) and Application Nr RR/2017/582/P (30 unit scheme) on 18th July 2017 and 7th March 2018 respectively.

Para 3

In March 2018, Russell Beswick signed a Section 106 agreement to provide 40% affordable homes. Almost immediately he received a 'site inspection report'. **Russell Beswick has always refused to reveal this report. The latest refusal was on 24 November 2020,** see www.burwashsaveourfields.org.uk/Exhibits 16 E-mail to the developer dated 3 December 2020. Sure enough, a planning application was put together for 30 homes with a claim there should be no affordable homes because that would not enable him to make the 20% profit in accordance with the viability system. In June 2018, his planning statement for the application was signed.

While the full site investigation report, which amounts to 236 pages has not been issued, the Executive Summary was issued to Robert Banks undercover of an email dated 18th December 2018. This sets out the findings and recommendations of the full report.

Para 4

So the saga continued. Rother District Council planners continued to back the developer. In January 2019, the Councillors listened to the arguments and turned the scheme down unanimously. **Russell Beswick appealed.** In July 2019, the Planning Inspector dismissed the appeal primarily for AONB and design reasons. He felt those issues were so strong, he did not need to rule on the other issues.

Appeal made by Park Lane Homes (SE) Ltd not Russell Beswick.

Para 5

In January 2020, Russell Beswick had arranged a 'public consultation' exercise in Burwash for new designs. Neither he nor any member of the Russell Beswick company nor any member of the company managing the development attended. There was just an architect and his assistant who were unable to answer most of the questions asked. They only knew about the design. The developer's deception continued and his team spread the fiction that the design was now acceptable so there could be no objection to the scheme. Why it was thought that argument could be accepted is hard to imagine.

The consultation was organised with the Parish Council by the scheme Architect, MH Architects. This architect had been appointed as they had been the architects on two other schemes in Burwash which had been approved in the last few years. There was also a public meeting held with the Parish Council in December 2019 which was attended by PLHSE's Planning Consultant as well as MH Architects.

There was no "deception" as the previous Full Application was refused on the grounds of design, daylight issues and the completion of a S106. The S106 was agreed and completed with RDC/ESCC prior to the Appeal and the daylight issue was dismissed by the Inspector, for which he gave a partial award of costs. This left only the matter of design in terms of the reasons for refusal to be addressed/overcome. Feedback forms from the public consultation were received via the Parish Council and these were reviewed, and comments incorporated in final designs where appropriate.

Para 44

The approach taken by the developer is that the 30 housing units is agreed. This is another example of the deception of the developer.

The Outline Planning Permission (RR/2017/582/P) includes condition 6 confirming the development shall not exceed 30 dwellings. There is no deception as the quantum of development (up to 30 dwellings) has been approved.

Para 77

The developer's Community Involvement statement says, 'the design team have sought extensive involvement from the community regarding this scheme.' This is the opposite of the truth. There was no community involvement in the latest plans. All the house designs have been changed since the December 2019/January 2020 designs were seen.

Comments received in the Feedback Forms were reviewed and incorporated in design where appropriate hence the changes to the designs that were presented at the public consultation event.

Para 78

When the December 2019/January 2020 plans were subject of a village event on 8 January 2020, the developer and his agent declined to attend and only the architect was left to show those present some inaccurate artist's impressions, an inaccurate leaflet and a site plan. He showed no housing plans or any other material.

The meeting with the Parish Council in December 2019 was attended by the architect and PLHSE's Planning Consultant to answer the questions raised by the Parish Council.

There is no evidence that the drawings, including the 3D images, along with the Design Statement were inaccurate.

Para 79

The consultation exercise has been deceptive, reluctant and ill-informed. Interestingly, virtually everyone who filled in a form during that exercise was hostile to the proposal. The Parish Council figures were: 2 people were for the scheme (one was an investor living outside Sussex and the other was also from outside the village). 63 people did not support the scheme.

While there were objections raised in the Feedback Forms received from the Parish Council circa 30% of the responses included positive comments regarding the new designs.

Para 82

In the failed detailed planning application of 2018, the developer sought no consultation with the Parish Council or the wider community. Also in 2018, after the 21-day consultation period was over, Burwash: Save our Fields asked to meet the developer and his agent. A meeting took place. The developer and his agent complained about the questions asked and that the meeting was recorded, even though they both had consented to that at the beginning. Since then they have refused to meet with the group and blocked almost all the group's attempts at obtaining proper information about the applications.

There was no mention when the meeting was arranged that the meeting would be recorded. This was only brought up by Robert Banks after we arrived at the meeting.

There was an Agenda agreed when arranging the meeting, the Agenda was not followed, and Robert Banks raised matters that were not on the Agenda which we answered as fully as possible.

There has not been any request from Robert Banks or Burwash Save Our Fields for a further meeting following the public consultation therefore we cannot have declined to attend such a meeting.