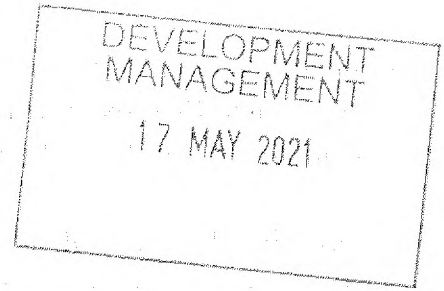


The Revd D A Hider



11 May 2021

*Neighbourhood Planning
Chichester District Council
East Pallant House
1 East Pallant
Chichester
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Reference:

Publication of the Southbourne Parish Neighbourhood Plan Review 2019-2037

Dear Sirs,

Cycle one of the Neighbourhood Plan concept excited me. At last, people living within a community would get their say on where new houses could be built, what infrastructure was need to support these builds and how environmental issues could be addressed. So, with enthusiasm, I was happy to support the current, democratically-approved plan which stated that new housing sites had to be situated with direct access to the A259 and not north of the railway line until the issue of the Stein Road level-crossing restriction was resolved. But, we all know that this was a false dawn. It was not long at all before 'the system' overruled the community's wishes and permitted building north of the railway without attention to the matter of the level-crossing problems.

Now, we have a new report. Lots and lots of words! My goodness, how many words there are! Lots of aspirational ideals! Lots of promises! Lots of work done by a clearly dedicated group of people for which I say 'thank you'. But, ... as we have all experienced following the way the current democratically-approved Neighbourhood Plan was disregarded by 'the system', I suspect a complete waste of time and effort.

Whatever is written in this new document, whatever is hoped for in terms of vision, will be undone in a few seconds by a developer deciding to build where he wants to build and what he wants to build! And, it seems, no matter the outcry, the resistance or whatever, the build will happen. Even worse is that what is built will not be what the community requires - such as starter homes, social housing or downsize-opportunity bungalows for the older folk - but what makes the most profit for the developer and,

increasingly, also for those who buy for the purpose of immediately renting out at inflated rates. Promised infrastructure improvements - whether that be facilities or environmental - will not happen, as has also been experienced in recent times.

Reports like these are all very well, but they lack 'teeth' to ensure that the community and its environment are protected from wanton destruction through over-building. Plus, of course, what is to be built needs to be specific to that community with a standard that is the best (future) practice in terms of energy supply and other environmental considerations - along with a mandatory requirement for the developer to provide any needed upgrade to the infrastructure (e.g. roads, sewage, water supplies, school places, local medical provision, etc). Perhaps, also, this the time to introduce a restriction that states that for the first five years after the initial completion of the sale of a property, it cannot be let for rental. With thinking like this, developers might not be quite so keen to concrete over local valuable arable and green field sites to build unsuitable houses which might become more difficult to sell and, certainly, more expensive to build.

Today, we have heard the Government announcement about downgrading planning approval requirements for areas such as the local one. In view of this unwelcome action, it is imperative that any future Neighbourhood Plan document reflects the needs of the community in absolute terms for both the types of houses to be built and infrastructure that must precede any building. Without such definition, I cannot see that there now is any reason for this new report as it is presented, let alone support it.

Yours faithfully,

