

## The Midhurst Society

**SDNP/21/06432/FUL and SDNP/21/06433/LIS** at King Edward VII Estate.

Comprehensive planning application to include Class C2 (Extra Care) development comprising of 84 units (King Green East) and 14 dwellings (Superintendent's Drive), care facilities etc.

Structural repair, refurbishment, fit out and change of use for Restaurant and Retail (Class E) purposes the Grade II\* listed former Chapel building.

Response by **The Midhurst Society**: We **OBJECT** to the proposals.

It is disappointing and frustrating to have to spend time and effort reading proposals that are similar in substance to proposals that have previously been rejected. It seems almost to be a vexatious abuse of the planning process.

Nevertheless, we consider part of our civic duty to safeguard the historic nature of our town and neighbouring villages; to protect the natural landscape; and to protect and enhance the wellbeing of our residents and visitors. The elected Committee often acts on these principles without putting every issue to its members. In controversial cases, we seek to establish the wishes of our members and the wider community.

On 22 January 2022 we posted details of the two applications on Facebook. It was seen by just under 1,000 people (a sizeable proportion of the whole population) and 225 people actively engaged with the post. There were 47 comments, all of which were opposed to the development as proposed. We expected that the majority of objections would be concerned with impacts on infrastructure, but it seemed that even people in Midhurst were simply aghast at the sheer size and density of this mini village in these quiet woodlands on what used to be known as Lord's Common.

On the Planning Portal, we have also noted many objections from individuals and from the Easebourne Residents' Action Group, Easebourne Parish Council, Midhurst Town Council, and Campaign to Protect Rural England. Serious concerns are expressed by South East Water and by WSCC Highways Authority. Such overwhelming opposition cannot be ignored. Even Historic England, for whom the preservation of the former Chapel is paramount, has concerns,

To reiterate, we **OBJECT** to the proposals on the grounds that they are too similar to what has already been rejected and that it is an unsuitable location for a 'retirement village' lacking, as it is, in public transport, shops, medical support and many other services. The only access is a narrow, tree-lined road which, if blocked by fallen trees or by forest fire could put residents' lives at risk. More specifically:

1. SDNP/21/06432/FUL is too similar to SDNP/19/03904/FUL – already refused.
2. No evidence has been offered that there is demand for a retirement village in this location.

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3. No evidence has been submitted justifying the creation of a retirement village in the protected landscape of the South Downs National Park.
4. The design is wholly incompatible with the original Sanatorium building and Chapel – and even with some of the later developments.
5. The density of the proposed residential units is more appropriate for a university campus.
6. No provision is made for Affordable Housing.
7. The water companies throughout the whole of the south-east of England are struggling to provide sufficient clean water for existing demand. This site is no exception, and its relative isolation renders it even more difficult to guarantee uninterrupted supplies.
8. There is no access to public transport, and no safe way for elderly retirees to walk or cycle to shops and other services. The minibus that used to provide daily trips to Midhurst and Haslemere has not operated for decades.
9. The existing health centres in nearby towns are already overstretched.
10. The occupants would have no option other than to travel by private car or taxi for all their requirements. The parking facilities as proposed would be damaging to this Heritage site whilst remaining inadequate for the number of new residential units, and for those who take their cars into Midhurst, public parking spaces there are already at a premium.
11. There is only one major route within a mile of the site; the A286 running north to Haslemere & Guildford, and south to Midhurst & Chichester. North Mill Bridge in Midhurst is a pinch-point for traffic, resulting in long queues of standing vehicles; and further south there is another pinch-point at the top of Rumbolds Hill - where air quality is already a problem from standing traffic. Adding daily vehicle journeys from and to the site, whether residents' cars or delivery vehicles, would exacerbate an already serious problem.
12. It is difficult to imagine that a restaurant in the former Chapel would be a viable proposition, and subsidizing the running costs by charging residents (who may not want to use the facility) is draconian and unfair. If the restaurant fails, the problem of preserving the Chapel building will remain.

In conclusion, we consider this application to be purely opportunistic without due regard to the sensitivity of the historic buildings on site and the National Park setting; and without due regard to the safety, comfort and well-being of existing residents or the residents the development might attract. **We recommend that both applications are refused.**

Harvey Tordoff |  
Acting Chairman  
The Midhurst Society

20 February 2022