Havant Borough Council: APP/21/00893
Outline planning application for demolition of the existing buildings and the erection of a new residential scheme (C3 use of approximately 210 dwellings to include affordable housing) and associated landscaping, access and supporting infrastructure, all other matters reserved.
Land north of Long Copse Lane, Emsworth, PO10 7UN

Westbourne Parish Council (WPC) objects to this application, which it believes would create an unsustainable and unplanned form of development with a lack of appropriate infrastructure and integration into local communities, including Westbourne.

Earlier this year, the Inspector expressed serious misgivings regarding the Havant Borough Council (HBC) Local Plan. As a consequence, the HBLP was withdrawn and HBC are currently putting together a revised Plan, which, it is claimed, will pay even greater attention than the previous Plan to the protection of the natural environment. It would, therefore, seem appropriate to await the new Plan before deciding whether or not to sacrifice a large area of open countryside and natural habitat in the north of Emsworth. Withdrawal of the HBLP does not, in the opinion of WPC, improve the case for site H8 and the necessity to approve sites unallocated sites like this on the basis of housing need.

WPC considers the proposed development to be an unsustainable extension of northern Emsworth into an area of open countryside which is not close to an established centre with associated amenities and facilities, including public transport. WPC considers that Havant Borough Council should increase density in other sustainable areas of the Borough first to meet its housing allocations before considering the proposed site.

The form and extent of the proposed development would have a significant and harmful impact upon the character and appearance of the local area and the wider landscape. The site is in an area of open countryside right up against the county boundary and immediately adjacent to the northern end of the Emsworth/Westbourne wildlife corridor. As such, it would constitute a major incursion and barrier to wildlife connections between Hollybank Woods, Southleigh Forest, the Solent Coast and the South Downs National Park. It is increasingly acknowledged that habitat should not be preserved in disconnected islands and that there should be buffer zones around them to minimise disturbance. There would be a loss of habitat for wildlife and 12 species of bats, including one of the largest colonies of rare Bechstein's bats in the UK. The authors of the main ecological impact report with this application play down the importance of the known Barbastelle activity in the area and seem to be unaware of the alcathoe records. It would seem that no record searches have been conducted since 2016. This is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) which forms the basis of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and is inappropriate for development given the option for much more suitable sites like Southleigh which has better road access, is less environmentally sensitive and, most importantly, will connect to the Budds Farm works, which has plentiful sewage capacity, rather than the Thornham works.

The Parish Council understands there is insufficient capacity at Thornham Wastewater Treatment Works for any new housing within its catchment area. The

proposed development utilises Thornham sewage works, which has only 120 houses capacity remaining (Chichester District Council (CDC) calculations, Feb 2022). Beyond this limit Thornham works will not be able to accommodate any more new housing until remedial work is done by Southern Water at the plant. With no new Ofwat funding for improvements until April 2023. this work is not likely to be implemented before 2027/28. In addition, HBC plans 350 new houses to be connected to Thornham in its Local Plan for Emsworth, and CDC plans 1,580 new houses between Southbourne, Westbourne, Hambrook and Nutbourne. This capacity limitation is underpinned by a CDC Position Statement issued Dec 2021 that HBC will need to respond to under its Duty to Cooperate, and HBC should issue its own version of this Position Statement to reflect these sewage capacity constraints. Pollution into Chichester Harbour and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty should be avoided at all costs.

It is understood that HBC has temporarily paused the approval of any residential developments in the face of updated terms and conditions for dealing with nutrient neutrality as defined by Natural England." (HBC news release from 21/03/22).

The proposed site is close to the modest and historic village of Westbourne in West Sussex. The cumulative effect of further housing, in addition to the 250 new homes built at the Redlands Grange development in north Emsworth in 2013, would dominate the local area and have a harmful impact upon Westbourne and its rural character and setting. The development of a further 210 homes - possibly up to 260 if future development identified on the plan and adjacent to the site is approved - would exacerbate the closing of the countryside gap between the two settlements of Emsworth and Westbourne on the Hampshire/West Sussex border. This gap is important as it helps to define the separate identities of small towns and villages and prevents settlements merging into a South Hampshire urban sprawl.

In response to a development proposed at what subsequently became Redlands Grange, the Westbourne Neighbourhood Plan adopted in September 2021 contains the following statements:

"The western edge of the village is directly adjacent to Havant Borough, which is currently proposing extensive development on its side of the boundary. 260 houses are proposed adjacent to the boundary. This development will significantly reduce the existing gap between Havant and Westbourne and, unless it is maintained on the Westbourne side, it will adversely impact on the rural character and lead to coalescence of the separate settlements. This therefore restricts the development potential within Chichester District".

"Our community vision is for Westbourne Parish to continue to thrive as a vibrant and distinctive community: … to avoid the erosion of that identity through development which would inappropriately lead to the coalescence of local neighbouring communities".

In other words, WPC recognises the eastward pressure of development from Havant towards the parish boundary and seeks to reduce adverse impacts of development on the rural character of the area and prevent coalescence through policies which aim to establish a strong sense of place, where the individual identity of the Parish, actual or perceived, is maintained. This proposal reduces the existing settlement gap resulting in both actual and perceived coalescence.

There is little doubt that the proposed development at Site H8 would exacerbate this problem.

Land and Partners state “Long Copse Lane is and will continue to be a quiet lane, used and suitable for use by all. It will continue to have the physical attributes of a lane, like many across Hampshire and the wider country. There is no evidence that it’s lengthy history of safe use will change as a result of the development and this is a conclusion which is shared by WSCC”. WPC considers that this statement grossly underestimates the number of traffic movements along Long Copse Lane and eastwards of the site and the impact this would have on local residents and the Westbourne community.

The transport report refers to the range of local facilities and services available in Westbourne. These services would be a major attraction to new residents of the development as it already is to existing residents of Long Copse Lane. Based on the current network of roads, new residents wishing to access these services would use Long Copse Lane in much greater numbers than suggested in the report as it provides the quickest and most direct route. The eastern section of Long Copse Lane in West Sussex is narrow, making it virtually impossible for vehicles to pass, and has poor forward visibility with blind bends and high rural hedges. There are no footpaths or street lights and the narrow lane is unable to accommodate any more traffic. The driving conditions in winter are particularly dangerous for vulnerable users during the morning and evening peak flow when it is dark. To state that the east end of the lane will be little impacted is absurd; there will be a significant increase in traffic flow along LCL and the roads it feeds into at both ends, and one can see major congestion issues ahead. To provide “passing places” along the lane will not be adequate either. One has only to witness the results of frustrated drivers along the lane and around the village, and this will be exacerbated. Long Copse Lane will no longer be a safe area for walkers or cyclists and, with the provision of these new homes, will come young families. Children, cyclists, horseriders and increased traffic is not a good mix. WPC urges members of HBC Planning Committee to visit Long Copse Lane to the east of the proposed site. They would then see for themselves that the lane is unsuitable for any additional traffic.

Long Copse Lane also provides an alternative route for commuter traffic heading towards Chichester or northwards towards the A3. This would cause visibility issues at the junction of Long Copse Lane and North Street in Westbourne, where visibility is very restricted and increased turning movements would create safety issues. There are no proposals within the scheme to deal with this junction which is considered to be unacceptable.

There are significant flooding issues on Long Copse Lane that occur towards the lower levels of the land nearest to Westbourne. As a result of the flooding, the road surface is poor and there is a need to take action to deal with this problem should the development proceed, as increased use would be exacerbated by the flooding problem. WPC considers that the lack of proposals to address this issue is a serious fault with the proposals that have been prepared by the developer.

There is a lack of local facilities to support the proposed development, including schools, local shops, libraries, transport, health services, sports, leisure and community facilities, with the nearest in Emsworth being two miles away. The

developer has underestimated the attractiveness of Westbourne (see above), which would be seen as the primary location for shopping, schooling, pubs and restaurants. Westbourne's roads are very congested, parking is already difficult, and services are stretched. WPC considers that infrastructure contributions would be required to support Westbourne village centre and improve its capacity to cope with the potential influx of users arising from the proposed development. Land and Partners have proposed the following: "Suggested improvements: Tactile paving at existing dropped kerbs of New Road / White Horse pub. Tactile paving at existing dropped kerbs of The Square / opposite the Co-Op". This is the first Westbourne has heard of these improvements. No consultation with the Parish Council has taken place and it is unclear as to whether any of these suggested improvements are practicable.

Taking all these concerns into account, Westbourne Parish Council would urge Havant Borough Council to refuse this planning application not only on grounds of prematurity but also because the details of the scheme will cause significant harm to wildlife and will create a severe impact on the village of Westbourne that has not been properly considered or dealt with by suitable measures or mitigation.

The photographs below are included to show the proximity of the proposed site to Westbourne, the rural setting of Long Copse Lane and to demonstrate how the development would be an unsustainable extension of Emsworth into open countryside.

1. Looking north: View from Hampshire Farm Meadows. Westbourne to the east and Emsworth to the west.



2. Looking south: Gap between Westbourne and Emsworth.



3. Looking south: Section in red shows location of proposed development




v from North

