

DRAUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL

The Pines
Draughton
Skipton
BD23 6DU
9 February 2018

Development Control Services
Craven District Council
Attn: Ms G Kennedy

Dear Sirs

Application Ref. 2018/18883/FUL– Land at Draughton off access road to A65

Thank you for consulting us on the above planning application, which concerns a full application for a housing development off the old A65 in Draughton parish.

We object to this application for the reasons set out in this letter and attached Annexe.

In the summary section below, we give reasons for our objection with reference to material planning considerations, and in the Annexe we provide detailed comments, responding specifically to the proposals set out in the applicant's planning statement and associated documents.

The Parish Council's objection to this application is drawn from views expressed at a well-attended meeting held on 8 February 2018, at which residents overwhelmingly voted against the development. The Council has resolved to object principally because the site is inappropriate for development: it is in open countryside, outside the village boundary, in the Draughton Conservation Area, and in an unsustainable location.

The site

The area of proposed development is a field sloping down from the old A65 road into the village to the tree lined Howgill Beck below, a tributary of the River Wharfe. It has until recently been used as grazing land. Draughton is a small attractive village, typical of the Yorkshire Dales, lying on the boundary of the National Park and visible from it. It is characterised by its setting, with stone-built properties and dry-stone walls much in evidence. As noted in the applicant's Heritage Statement, the village as a whole has a "picturesque informality", with the main residential development "anchored" along the main road through the village (Low Lane). This pattern of settlement is tightly knit, having been strongly influenced by the steep contours created by the valley formed by Howgill Beck. The applicant's Landscape Assessment notes that the "steeply sided valley of Howgill provides a natural limit to development". The scenic Dales landscape surrounding the village is a key feature in its setting, and one which is recognised by the widely-drawn Conservation Area boundary (which includes the proposed development

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site). These are the main attributes from which the locality derives its character and appearance.

Background

A previous application for a development of 9 houses on this site was submitted in 2016 and was withdrawn in early 2017. Since then, aware that the applicant and developer were likely to submit a revised application, we have invited them to attend our meetings to engage in pre-application discussion with the community (as developers are encouraged to do under National Planning Policy Framework Guidance (NPPF)). We have received no response. We thus need to comment on this application without the benefit of prior community engagement with the applicant.

Summary of objections related to material planning considerations

1. Planning Policies – Local Plans (1999 and 2017) and NPPF

a) Landscape

In their consultation response to you, Natural England advise very careful assessment of this application under national and local planning policies, having regard to the special qualities of the landscape and the statutory protections in place.

The development is not compatible with (saved) Policies ENV 1 and 2 from the Craven District Local Plan 1999, nor with Policy ENV1 of the new draft Local Plan, as it does not respect the landscape setting of the settlement. The site lies outside the development limit of the village, and within the local Conservation Area, in an area of open countryside, and is visible from the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Developing in open countryside on this site is not justified as it would not benefit the rural economy and is not essential to its needs (1999 Plan), nor is it justified by special economic, environmental and/or social circumstances (2017 draft Plan).

With the Local Plan still in draft, as the developer notes, the consistency of its policies with NPPF is a material consideration. Development on this site is not justified under the NPPF, which recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and requires the planning system to protect and enhance valued landscapes. This policy requires the restriction of development in this location, as the adverse effects of development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

b) Development in unsustainable location

Planning guidance contains a presumption in favour of sustainable development, but provides for the refusal of proposed developments which conflict with local planning principles. The Local Plan sets out a housing hierarchy in which Draughton is categorised as an unsustainable location. There is no housing development directed to Draughton as it is not regarded as a sustainable location for growth because of the lack of local amenities, facilities and infrastructure. This development will not bring any further

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facilities or infrastructure into the village; it will only put greater strain on the existing, very limited facilities and unsatisfactory infrastructure.

c) **Scale of development**

The development contravenes policy SP4 in the new Local Plan, in which Draughton is regarded as a Tier 5 settlement, to which low levels of growth are directed. This is defined as growth of fewer than 5 dwellings. Draughton already has planning permission granted for 3 dwellings since the inception of the Plan period in 2012. If the proposed 4 new houses are added, growth of 7 dwellings (at the outset of the 20-year Plan period) would result, and this is inappropriate in a location regarded as unsustainable for development.

d) **Housing mix**

The proposed housing mix, of 3/4 bed executive houses, replicates the current housing stock in the village which is already well-supplied with family-sized executive housing. This development would not, as the applicant suggests, meet identified need in Draughton, as none has been identified. The applicant suggests a possible need for housing for young adults yet offers no provision for starter homes or affordable housing.

2. Effect on Conservation Area

Conservation Areas enjoy statutory protection. The applicant notes that conservation boundaries in the district are to be reviewed, but since this has not yet happened, the adverse effect of this development on Draughton's Conservation Area as it stands must be recognised (see para 3 below). Under NPPF, great weight has to be attached to the significance of a designated heritage asset, which in this case is the whole of the Conservation Area, including its setting in the landscape, visible from the National Park.

3. Previous Appeal Decision

In 1992, the Planning Inspector ruled that a development on this site would harm the character and appearance of the designated Conservation Area. Suggestions in the Planning Statement as regards the appearance of existing housing nearby should be disregarded, as the Inspector's judgement was given when the housing on Spring Rise was in place. The ruling states that this site, in its entirety, is a key feature in the setting of the village, contributing significantly to the visual amenity of the area.

4. Highways

This development would have adverse effects on traffic safety in the village, where the Parish Council has been working with Highways for a number of years to bring forward safety improvements at the two main junctions from the A65 into Draughton, and at the Low Lane junction into the village. Both of these safety issues would be exacerbated by the increased traffic flow and on-street parking generated by a development on this site.

5. Infrastructure

This development would place further strains upon the limited infrastructure in this settlement. It is not well-served by cable broadband, there is no piped gas to the village and electricity networks have not been reliable in recent months.

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There are concerns that removing the natural drainage capacity of the field at this location would have an adverse effect on the lower settlement area, potentially causing increased run-off and localised flooding. It is believed that there are a number of natural springs running and draining through the field, and these courses need to be accommodated. It is unclear from the applicant's planning material whether the site has been surveyed for such existing natural water courses.

6. Residential Amenity

The proposed layout of the site would lead to an adverse effect on the residential amenity of the nearby properties. For those on Spring Rise, there would be issues of overlooking and loss of privacy, and for those in the cottages opposite the field, there would be a significant loss of outlook. There are also concerns that introducing another collection of communal bins would exacerbate current issues with rat infestation in the village, attracted by the communal bins at the existing site near the village hall.

7. Layout and density of building

The proposed new houses are sited close to the site boundary and crowded into the western corner of field, leading to an over development of this part of the site.

Recommendations

The Parish Council recommends that both the Conservation Area and the integrity and identity of the existing settlement within its boundaries be protected, and this means that any development should be refused - it is immaterial whether it is proposed to build 9 houses or four houses, as any housing development on this site would alter materially the visual approach to the village and detract significantly from the overall character and visual amenity of the locality.

This application challenges the concepts of boundaries for settlement areas and Conservation Areas, and thus poses a dangerous threat to our village and to Craven district, if both the village boundary and Conservation Area boundary are to be breached without justification. Research published by CPRE, using statistics compiled by the ONS during 2001-2011, showed some 1300 villages vanishing as a consequence of rural sprawl, with many others set to suffer the same fate under current pressures for housing.

The designations protecting village boundaries and Conservation Areas are there for a purpose and should be upheld, unless development is justified under local planning policies or under NPPF. This development in Draughton is not justified under planning policies, as explained in this letter, principally because Draughton is regarded as an unsustainable location for development in the draft Local Plan for the Craven district; it is not justified under NPPF because the development would harm the special quality of the local heritage asset, the Conservation Area, and would be in an unsustainable location.

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This planning application has been submitted at a time when the draft Local Plan is at Regulation 19 consultation stage. The timing of the submission of this application is unhelpful for the planning authority and local community alike, as planning judgements may have been inconsistent during the period of the Plan's development and precedents are difficult to rely on. Paragraph 4.27 of the applicant's Planning Statement (dated 19 December 2017) refers to a Planning Inspector's appeal decision made on 29 September 2017 in which, in the absence of an approved Plan, a planning application was allowed, in the light of some uncertainty as regards the figures underlying the planning authority's 5-year housing land supply position. The applicant characterises this decision as "*the most up-to-date independent assessment of the council's housing land supply position*". This is incorrect. A more recent appeal decision, made on 22 November 2017 (Appeal Ref. APP/C2708/W/17/3177857) has to be taken into account. Here, the Planning Inspector accepted that, although the planning authority's figures had yet to be examined in public, "*there was no proper basis to do anything other than accept the [District] Council's position [i.e. that it could demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply]*" (paragraph 10 of the decision). The appeal for a planning development in open countryside, where no detailed evidence of housing need in the area had been supplied, was thus dismissed.

We hope for greater clarity for Craven as the Plan passes through its final stage of being examined in public. However, accepting that these next few months, before the Plan is adopted, will be a time of continuing uncertainty, we recommend that the Planning Committee act with confidence, stand behind the vision of the draft Local Plan, and apply to this application the principles of its spatial strategy, settlement hierarchy and preferred option for sustainable growth distribution, clearly indicating that a housing development like this in Draughton is inappropriate.

Yours faithfully

Jane Markham
Clerk to the Council

Copies:
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District Cllr D Pighills

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ANNEXE to letter dated 9 February

Detailed Comments

In our detailed comments which follow, we necessarily repeat many of the points which applied to the previous application for a development of 9 houses on this site.

Our objection is based on the following material considerations:

Section 1 – Planning Policies

Craven District Local Plan 1999 ENV 1, ENV 2 and H4

Publication Draft Craven District Local Plan ENV 1 Section 5 and SP4

1. The development is not compatible with (saved) Policies ENV 1 and 2 from the Craven District Local Plan 1999, nor with ENV 1 and SP4 of the Publication Draft Local Plan, all of which seek to conserve the quality of Craven's landscape and countryside, and respect the landscape setting of settlements. The site lies outside the development limit of the village, and within the local Conservation Area, in an area of open countryside (referred to in 1999 as a Special Landscape Area). The village is clearly visible in its setting from the Yorkshire Dales National Park. A development of new houses on this site would harm the character and appearance of this area of countryside at the entrance to this traditional rural settlement.
2. The applicant's Planning Statement, inaccurately, uses Draughton's designation as an H4 settlement in the 1999 Plan to suggest that the village is appropriate for the proposed development. In fact, the H4 policy relates only to development within the development limits of villages and is not concerned with development outside in open countryside. The 1999 Plan considered settlements in the H4 list as suitable for infill, conversion and windfall sites. Planning permissions granted for new residential accommodation in the village since the 2012 inception of the new draft Local Plan have fallen into this category.
3. The draft Local Plan policy ENV1 envisages growth in settlements where such growth respects their landscape setting. For Draughton, this setting is protected as it is within the designated Conservation Area. Under NPPF, Conservation Areas are designated heritage assets and as such, are to be given great weight in planning decisions.
NPPF advises that:
“When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.”

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4. The applicant's Landscape Assessment also refers to the duty of planning authorities to "preserve and enhance" a Conservation Area, and this refers not just to the buildings in it but to all the elements that comprise it. The Conservation Area in Draughton was designated in March 1981 and extended in April 1996. The designation made at both these dates included the properties which had already been built off Low Lane, on the cul de sac known as Spring Rise. The applicant's Landscape Assessment, in its conclusions as regards the appearance of these existing houses, is thus unsupported, and the applicant's Planning Statement does not therefore provide clear and convincing reasons to justify the potential harm that would be caused to the heritage asset by this development.
5. The development is not appropriate in relation to the size and form of the village, whose pattern is shaped by the valley contours of Howgill Beck. This is identified in the applicant's Landscape Assessment, which notes that the proposed site lies outside the natural development limit for the settlement, which follows these valley contours from south to north. Development of this site would potentially lead to further development along the east to west axis, which does not conform to the natural settlement pattern.
6. The development is not justified under (saved) Policy ENV 1 of the Craven District Local Plan, as it would not benefit the rural economy and is not essential to its needs, nor is it justified under Policy SP4 of the 2017 draft Plan by any special economic circumstances, as housing on this site is not necessary to support a healthy rural economy and its community. The local economy is largely agricultural in nature, and, contrary to statements made by the applicant, there are 3 working farms on the fringe of the core settlement area in Draughton, with associated barns and farm buildings, a number of them in the core area itself. The development would remove from use a field which, until very recently, and historically, has been used for agricultural purposes. The Planning Statement is inaccurate in suggesting that the field is not productive for agriculture – self-evidently, it would be, if it were to be brought back into use. There is no other local economy, as such (in terms of businesses, shops or other facilities and amenities), to which residents of the new dwellings would be able to contribute; the local farms and liveries are family run and offer no local employment to residents in the community. Care workers at the nursing home are not drawn from the village but commute into it to work. With the exception of the parish council clerk, residents who work in the village do so as employees of other organisations based outside the area, or else are lone self-employed individuals who do not offer any local employment opportunities to other residents. There is an error in the Planning Statement in that there are no formal live-work units in the village.
7. The development is not compatible with (saved) Policy H4 of the Craven District Local Plan 1999 which states that residential development in villages should be

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- limited to infilling, conversions or small-scale development, ie of a scale, density and layout appropriate to the size and form of the village, nor is it compatible with Policy SP4 of the draft Local Plan 2017 which states that development should be small in scale compared with the size of the settlement. In a core settlement area of some 65 houses, a development of 4 houses, although fewer than the 9 requested in the previous application, represents growth of over 6%, concentrated on one new development site: this is not infill, nor is it, proportionately, small scale.
8. This development is not compatible with the draft Local Plan SP4 spatial strategy, as Draughton has not been identified as a suitable location for any of the preferred sites for housing allocations required to meet the District-wide housing targets. This is because it is regarded as a 5th tier location (ie small villages, hamlets and open countryside), unsuitable for any but low-level housing growth (fewer than 5 dwellings – para. 4.52). Draughton is already contributing to this housing target, with permission having been granted for three additional dwellings (which are, respectively, infill small scale developments and a barn conversion). When these houses are built, Draughton will have achieved most of its targeted low-level growth. If this development is approved, permission will have been granted for 7 additional dwellings in total, and this, amounting to an effective growth of 11%, clearly exceeds plan targets for this settlement at the very outset of the draft Plan's 20-year period.
 9. Since the proposed development is in a Tier 5 settlement and is not small in scale in proportion to the size of the settlement, under the terms of the draft Local Plan Policy SP4, it should only be supported if it can be justified. This development is not justified under any of the criteria listed. It is not necessary to support the rural economy (as set out above), it is not justified in terms of improvements to the environment or conservation of heritage assets (it actively detracts from the local character of the Conservation Area, and, contrary to the principles of NPPF, removes from the environment the rich biodiversity found in the ecosystem of a rural field) and it is not justified through the neighbourhood planning process (there isn't one, because no housing has been allocated to the area).
 10. With no Neighbourhood Plan to refer to, the applicant quotes from the Draughton Parish Plan 2009/10. Its aims as regards housing growth are misrepresented in the Planning Statement. The Parish Plan principally reflected the aims of villagers concerned to maintain and protect the existing valued features of village life in this location, including preservation of its setting within the Conservation Area. Where housing was referenced, the Parish Plan was interested in small-scale developments within the village boundaries (consistent with the 1999 Local Plan's aims for an H4 settlement) to help ensure a stable mixed-age population for the community, but was not concerned with larger developments, such as this one, and developments outside the village boundary. The planning statement's

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references to the development of the local population are out of date; since the 2011 census (and the Parish Plan, whose aims were successfully achieved in this respect), where houses in the existing village stock have changed hands, the new households have introduced a proportionate influx of younger families with children into the community. Indeed, in the year since submission of the previous application, all the houses which have changed hands at the top of the village are now homes for young families.

Section 2 - Previous Appeal Decision

11. An application for a housing development on this site in 1992 was refused for the reasons set out in paragraphs 1-4 above. On Appeal, the Inspector noted that a development here would seriously detract from the rural setting of and approach to Draughton and would harm the character and appearance of the designated Conservation Area. He commented that the site proposed for development “contributes valuably and in its entirety to the visual approach to Draughton from the south east and adds significantly to the quality of the Conservation Area”. The applicant’s Heritage Statement misses the point in this respect, in that it focuses on analysing the heritage value of individual buildings in the village, rather than assessing the impact of the development on the designated heritage asset, ie the Conservation Area, as a whole.
12. The Inspector reached his judgement about the quality of the Conservation Area when the houses on Spring Rise were present, and thus the assertions made by the applicant in the Planning Statement as regards the appearance of this part of the existing settlement of Draughton are not supported.
13. This judgement also contradicts the comments in the applicant’s Heritage Statement concerning the sensitivity of the visual amenity of the site. Clearly, at the time, the field was being used for grazing, and it was being properly maintained for this traditional rural purpose. This application needs to be refused in order that the field can be returned to agricultural use, restoring the full value and character of this landscape. This would be in line with Policy ENV 1 of the draft Local Plan, which seeks to restore degraded landscapes.

Section 3 - National Planning Policy Framework Guidance

14. This development of houses at this location is not sustainable within the meaning of the guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (reflected in policy SD1 of the draft Local Plan), and the presumption in favour of development does not therefore apply to it. It is not a sustainable development because:
 - It is not in the right place to support growth and innovation as the existing infrastructure is lacking (see section 4 below) and, contrary to the portrayal in

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the Planning Statement, there are no existing amenities and very limited social facilities in the village – only the church and village hall (run by volunteers). The hall has a small playground for pre-school children attached to it but there are no public playing fields in the village, and no football field. There is no shop or any other retail outlet, no pub or cafe, and no school or other public or commercial services. The mobile library service was withdrawn some years ago. The footpaths around the village, noted by the applicant, do not provide a safe accessible walking route to any nearby service centres; unless prepared for a strenuous hour-plus hike, those travelling either on foot or bike to Skipton or Addingham have to use the busy A65 or A59, where there are no pavements along any part of the route. The bus service referred to in the Planning Statement is an hourly service, unsuitable for most commuters and also for most social activities, as it does not run in the evenings or on Sundays. The majority of villagers thus use cars to access facilities in Skipton, Addingham and Ilkley. The addition of houses at this location outside the village would merely contribute to the growth in journeys by private vehicle and would therefore also conflict with PO1 of the new draft Plan which seeks to promote sustainable traffic movements (see section 5).

- Housing growth on this scale in Draughton is not required to meet the needs of present and future generations because of the village's lack of accessible local services, this being especially an issue for younger and non-car-owning households. The development comprises houses of a size and type which replicate the stock already available in the village, with no additional choice of accommodation therefore available to residents. A new housing estate would not improve the quality of life for the existing community, nor would it improve any of the conditions in which the existing population lives and works. It would in fact have the opposite effect because of the additional strain it would place on the limited capacity of the local infrastructure.
- The development does not protect or enhance the natural and historic environment; again, it has the opposite effect as it removes one of the natural and significant features at the entrance to the village, as set out in section 1.

15. The unsustainability of this location in terms of the lack of local services, facilities and amenities is the reason why Draughton is included in the draft Local Plan as a 5th tier settlement, to which low levels of growth are directed, because a 5th tier settlement does not have even a basic level of services.

16. Furthermore, since the presumption in favour of planning approval is clearly not relevant, as the location is not sustainable, the core planning principles in the planning system need to be applied. On this basis, the Conservation Area needs to be protected, and the intrinsic character and beauty of this particular area of the countryside between the Bradford urban-focused communities to the east and, to the west, the large, distinctive service environment of Skipton town needs to be recognised, respected and conserved.

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Section 4 - Physical Infrastructure

17. There are concerns that the applicant has not sufficiently researched the local watercourses and that the field carries underground drainage channels for the network of local springs. This should be fully taken into account before any works are carried out which could disrupt these existing natural drainage features.
18. There is a significant lack of capacity in the existing infrastructure to service this housing development.
 - Access to superfast broadband is not comprehensive throughout Draughton parish. The proposed development site lies more than 1.5km from the nearest cabinet at Draughton bottom, and there are no plans to install a second cabinet at the top of the village. Superfast broadband will therefore only be available to the new houses subject to the capacity of the network at this distance from the cabinet, and their additional connections will put strain on the current network service provided to the existing population.
 - There is no piped gas service to the village, and residents of a housing estate here would be likely to use oil or solid fuel for heating. Tanker deliveries servicing the site would exacerbate traffic concerns (see section 5).
 - There are questions concerning the capacity of the existing sewage and drainage networks. There have been instances of raw sewage leaking onto the lane by the Church (in the centre of the village).
 - There are potential questions as regards the capacity and/or condition of the local electricity network. On Christmas Day 2017, all households in the village were deprived of electricity because of a fault in the network.
 - There could be flooding issues for households further down the village, bordering Howgill Beck, in that a significant proportion of the natural drainage system afforded by the existing field for the absorption of run-off would be taken out of use by this development.

Section 5 - Highway Issues

19. Traffic safety at the junction into the new estate is an issue. There is an error in the Planning Statement, in that vehicles accessing the housing estate would not do so from the A65. They would in fact turn onto the more minor village road off the A65, and the entry/exit point would be onto a double-decker bus route opposite two existing cottages which usually have parked cars at the side of the road, narrowing it significantly.
20. The planning statement anticipates requirements for car parking on the site for 2 vehicles per house. This is probably a minimum, as there will no doubt be visitors' cars to accommodate too. There is limited availability of safe on-road parking near the development, and thus very little capacity for overspill parking from the new estate. Resident parking along the road opposite the field has increased over the past year, with the influx of two new families into the cottages

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opposite the field. Both these families park cars, horse boxes and trailers on the road. Staff and visitors to the nursing home also park along the road. Pressures on parking along this stretch of road are currently intensifying further, as the Parish Council is working on the introduction of safety improvements at the nearby junction with Low Lane, involving the displacement of parked vehicles back towards the stretch of road opposite the proposed development site. A photo provided on p.30 of the Landscape Assessment neatly illustrates this problem, showing a row of parked cars and trailers end to end opposite the proposed access point to the new houses.

21. The additional traffic arising from the development would exacerbate the safety concerns already under review at the two junctions from the village onto the A65 from Draughton, and down the single-track lane known as Donkey Neddy onto the A59. Delivery vehicles and oil tankers servicing the new houses would also add to the volume of traffic having to gain access to this settlement via narrow rural roads. This application is thus not compatible with (saved) Policy ENV 2 of the Craven District Local Plan.
22. It also contravenes policy PO1 of the new draft Plan, as contrary to suggestions put forward in the applicant's Planning Statement, with an infrequent public transport service through the village, the residents in the new houses, in common with other village residents, would commute (by car) to other employment centres in the Leeds/Bradford conurbation or would combine this with working from home. This pattern of work and travel was analysed and described in our 2009 Parish Plan and is still evidenced now. These journeys would add to the overall volume of car journeys in the district, running counter to the Plan's policy aiming to promote sustainable traffic movements.

Section 6 - Residential Amenity

23. The proposed development would have an adverse effect on the residential amenity of the neighbouring properties. The design of the development, in which the new houses are crowded closely up against the western boundary of the site, leads to an unacceptable over-development of this half of the field, and an unacceptable impact on the two properties immediately adjacent to it at the end of Spring Rise. We would ask you to take into account material considerations in this respect, including the loss of outlook, risk of overlooking and noise for these residents. We would also highlight the significant loss of outlook for the two properties opposite the development site, whose residential amenity would be severely adversely affected.

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