

Press Release

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Town centre housing plans at odds with Wealden's new local plan

CCA points to 'astonishing' omissions and calls on residents to voice opposition

Crowborough Community Association (CCA) has called for clarity and honesty on car parking in the town centre following publication of the Wealden Local Plan draft submission by the district council.

The draft plan clearly states that "additional public car parking provision ... may be required to support growth in the Crowborough area." Nevertheless, Wealden District Council (WDC) is currently proposing to sell off the whole of Mead House car park for housing, which flies in the face of current planning recommendations for the site. In planning terms, housing on this site is not supported by the 1998 Local Plan policies that apply to this site. Furthermore, a government inspector who ruled on the future of the Beaconwood/Mead House site only some 18 months ago did not support housing development.

The CCA is calling on Crowborough residents to turn out in force at the annual Town Meeting on 12th April (All Saints Church 7.30pm) to voice their concern to Wealden councillors and support a resolution that condemns any loss of car parking space in the town centre.

The future success of Crowborough Community Centre, administered by CCA, depends on the right solution being applied to the Beaconwood/Mead House area and CCA contends that housing would be inappropriate next to a building that is used for late night entertainment. The CCA, with the Crowborough Town Council, has already fought off a Wealden proposal to allow the adjacent Pine Grove building and library to be demolished for housing. Instead, the Town Council has supported Crowborough by buying the building both to preserve the library and to establish an Enterprise Hub on the important town centre site.

"I am astonished that the new Wealden Local Plan fails to mention either the Community Centre or the Enterprise Hub, arguably two of the most significant community and business developments to have

happened in Crowborough in the last 50 years,” said David Larkin, a Crowborough town councillor and trustee of the CCA.

“And to say that Crowborough probably needs more parking spaces while at the same time trying to drive through a plan that would result in the loss of 82 car parking spaces at Mead House is, at the very least, disingenuous. What we require from Wealden is clear confirmation of the importance of the town as a business centre in East Sussex, clarity on the preservation of existing parking provision and an end to their plan to sell off land, designated for business use, for housing in order to line the council’s pockets to the detriment of Crowborough.

“We support the Town Centre Policy of ‘maintaining free parking in the town centre as this helps to attract visitors to the centre;’ as clearly stated in the new draft Local Plan. The Town Council, Chamber of Commerce and the CCA have always agreed that there should be no nett loss of car parking in Crowborough town centre and selling car parks for house building will damage both business and community interests in Crowborough.

“Parking in Crowborough town centre is likely to become more difficult in the future anyway as the Supermarkets begin to restrict or charge for use of their car parks.” Sufficient land has been found elsewhere in Crowborough to build the 300 additional houses for Crowborough provided for in the Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan.

CCA chairman Chantal Wilson said: “I urge everyone to come to the town conference on April 12th to show how important it is to Crowborough to keep the Mead House car park, especially as it is now often full. Everyone was brilliant when it came to ensuring the Pine Grove offices were kept instead of being demolished for housing. Now everyone has to pull together again to preserve our much needed parking to serve the ever-busier community centre and the town centre generally. I look forward to seeing everyone at the meeting!”

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Crowborough Community Association

The Crowborough Community Association has been active in Crowborough since 1975, when it opened the original CCA Hall in Park Road which had been built in 1925 as a Guide hut. It was ‘home’ to many of the town’s local organisations until momentum for a new community centre swelled following a public consultation by Wealden District Council on future retail development in the town. With funding from Crowborough Town Council and the National Lottery and on land donated by Wealden District Council, the new Crowborough Community Centre, costing £3.2 million, opened in 2012. It is now very much at the heart of the community with an average of 260 bookings each month for a large number of clubs, associations and individuals. The Centre is now financially self-supporting having exceeded bookings and income targets.