

# Press Release



13<sup>th</sup> March 2018

## **Revised housing plan an 'insult' to Crowborough**

### **Riddled with errors, no public car parking and no protection for Community Centre**

Crowborough Community Association has registered its anger and disappointment that the revised planning application to build houses and flats on land that includes Mead House car park has done nothing to meet its legitimate concerns over the future of the Community Centre or to preserve public car parking in the area.

The proposal, by Abbey Developments, to build 68 homes on land owned by Wealden and East Sussex councils met with a storm of opposition in Crowborough. To date, some 250 people have lodged formal objections with Wealden District Council protesting over the loss of public car parking in the Pine Grove area and the inappropriately close proximity of the development to the Community Centre – a licenced place of entertainment for some 500 people.

“The revised plan does nothing to preserve public car parking, which is Wealden policy, nor to create a sensible buffer zone between the housing/flats development and the Community Centre. It is plain and simply wrong to allow homes to be built so close to the Centre,” said a spokesman for the Community Association. A letter of objection from Sussex Police stated: “My concern would be the close proximity of the centre to a large percentage of the development and the exposure and potential impact it would have upon the resident’s amenities who would be living adjacent to a busy, thriving community centre.”

Perversely, a highly critical nine-page report on the proposed development by East Sussex County Council, one of the landowners, triggered the revised plan. The council’s Highways Authority recommended refusal of the application on the grounds of inadequate information. A principal concern was the lack of proof for the ‘nitrogen credits’ being claimed for the site based on the number of people working in the boarded up Beaconwood buildings which would be demolished.

“The revised application includes nitrogen credits from buildings no longer in existence and from other parts of the town. This appears to be nothing less than a gross manipulation of the planning process for which Wealden District Council, as well as Abbey Developments, must take responsibility,” added the spokesman.

The revised application also incorrectly includes the car park dedicated to the Pine Grove offices to assert that there is sufficient parking in the area for the Community Centre. This is wrong. It is not a public car park and any casual use of it will be denied to Centre users when work starts next month on transforming the old Pine Grove council offices into the Crowborough Enterprise Centre. The applicant’s Transport Statement also suggests that alternative parking is possible on the busy A26 Beacon Road and on the other side of Beacon Road in Goldsmiths Avenue, a proposal that is frankly risible.

“People should understand that Wealden has worked closely with Abbey on this planning application to maximise land-owner profit for Wealden and East Sussex councils without any thought or consideration being given to the legitimate concerns of the people of Crowborough,” said Chantal Wilson, chairman of Crowborough Community Association.

She added: “I am very disappointed that Wealden and Abbey have taken none of the points we have made into account, even though we have put forward a credible plan which preserves public car parking and provides the essential buffer zone between any development and the Community Centre.

“Let Wealden be in no doubt that Community Centre volunteers and the CCA Board of Trustees are going to find it very difficult to continue to make the Centre a success if this plan goes ahead in its current form. The CCA finds it insulting that the Centre is being undermined by organisations that clearly does not put any value on the enormous amount of voluntary time given to making the Community Centre a success and a vibrant contribution to Crowborough’s community spirit and vitality.”

***For more information:***

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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, 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.***