**Comments on Planning Application SDNP/22/00219/REM, a development of 7 new dwellings at Pickwick**

Amberley Parish Council has concerns about this application. The objections expressed in our response to planning application SDNP/21/02009/PRE have not been addressed and so are in large part repeated here together with some additional issues. This proposal is a major development by the main road at the entrance to the village when approaching from Storrington and will figure prominently in views from the Downs. Outline planning permission was granted for this site following a reduction in the number of dwellings planned from nine to seven. A comparison of those earlier plans with the current proposal, however, indicates that the developer has not reduced the built environment but has simply increased the size of houses built, leaving little outside space. The scale of the development proposed will make it difficult to achieve a satisfactory design for the landscape, as required by Policies EN1, HD4 and HD7 of the Amberley Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy HD3 of the Neighbourhood Plan states “New housing development should provide a mix of house types, sizes and tenures that meet the housing needs of the Parish of Amberley and the local area as evidenced in the most recent Local Housing Needs Study, particularly for smaller housing of 1 or 2 bedrooms.” The plans show only two 3-bedroom houses, which are intended to be the affordable homes, and five larger executive homes of similar size to each other. Indeed, four of the houses are substantially identical to each other which, when arranged around a cul-de-sac type layout, makes the development appear much too suburban and unsympathetic to a village environment. The applicant states that they have taken on board the planning permission for the neighbouring development at Strawberry Villas, which the parish council supported, but that has a mix of dwellings ranging from two to seven habitable rooms. That range is much more attuned to the needs of local people. Furthermore, including some smaller units would reduce the impression of over-development as there would be more green space. The ratio of house to garden in the current plan seems higher than is generally found in the area.

The large size of the planned houses further necessitates that the access road appears rather narrow. No doubt West Sussex Highways will opine on whether there is sufficient access for refuse and emergency vehicles and whether the sight lines for vehicles exiting on to the busy main road are adequate.

The Design and Layout Statement says that a landscape-led approach has been followed but there is no evidence of this. On the contrary, the landscape assessment submitted with this proposal was prepared over two years ago for a different scheme. Similarly, there are assertions that “The proposed built form would comprise a locally appropriate, high quality palette of materials and a variety of eaves heights and roof shapes. The locally distinct vernacular built form would be represented in the use of features and materials in individual building designs.” However, the drawings show houses that are suburban in appearance neither referencing the local Sussex vernacular architecture or, alternatively, being a modern design that might exhibit other architectural excitement. We note that the developer of Strawberry Villas originally proposed a suburban design but eventually came up with something that was more visually appealing.

We understand that the boundary between Pickwick and Downsland has been drawn incorrectly, so the design of the buffer zone will need to be reassessed.

The Sustainable Drainage System document has several references to “natural run-off” and “natural drainage” with an assumption that water will drain into the ditch on the eastern boundary but the site slopes in the opposite direction. Whilst it would no doubt be possible to design a drainage system that utilised that ditch, clear evidence of that should be obtained before planning permission is granted.

We note that a large part of the pre-application advice has been ignored. In particular, advice relating to visible parking, the preponderance of 4-bedroom detached houses and the resulting small gardens, and the positioning of the access route seems to us to be sensible advice and planning approval should be withheld until these issues are addressed.