

SELLINDGE PARISH COUNCIL

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January 22nd 2025

Planning application 23/1413/FH

Sellindge Parish Council Planning Committee, met on January 6th 2025

Present were – Cllrs N Fursdon (Chair), S Instance, Mrs J Tritton and Mrs L Cronin & the Deputy Clerk. Also present two members of the public.

Re: Objections to Planning Application 23/1413/FH - Elm Tree Farm Development

Dear Members of the District Council Planning,

Re: Outline Planning Application Ref. 23/1413/FH – Land to the North of Ashford Road, Downs Way, and Swan Green, Sellindge

The Sellindge Parish Council planning committee write to express our strong objection to the further updated outline planning application submitted by Quinn Homes. The proposal significantly threatens the character, sustainability, and well-being of our village and fails to address critical concerns raised by the council. Below, we provide further reasons why the application should be rejected.

All our comments as raised in the letter of 25th November still apply and as previously agreed we request that any decisions on this planning application be made by FDHC committee.

Given the local sensitivity and the fact that the site is not in the Core Strategy we note and agree with FDHC request in the letter of 19th July 2024 to the applicant that “the application is amended to become a full planning application (including details of layout, siting, landscaping, design scale and materials) which includes all the technical assessments necessary to demonstrate that this is a deliverable scheme” – this has not been done and the applicant is still applying for “outline planning”.

1. Planning Policy Context

The proposed development contravenes key local policies and planning principles:

Settlement Boundary Violation: The site is outside the designated settlement boundary and is categorized as open countryside. It is not allocated for development in the Core Strategy Review (CSR) or Places and Policies Local Plan in particular the application does not sit within Site A or B of CSR (Policy CSD9).

Exceeding Growth Capacity: Sellindge has already absorbed a disproportionate amount of housing growth, exceeding what is sustainable for its size and infrastructure.

Policy Non-Compliance: The application fails to meet CSR Policy SS1, SS3, and CSD3, which prioritize sustainable development within defined boundaries and limit rural developments to essential purposes.

This proposal undermines carefully planned growth and sets a dangerous precedent for unregulated development in the countryside.

2. Environmental Impact

The environmental risks posed by this development are severe and unacceptable:

Loss of Agricultural Land: The proposal involves developing Grade 2 agricultural land, crucial for local food production and environmental sustainability. Policy HW3 explicitly discourages such losses unless justified by compelling reasons, which this application fails to provide.

Ecological Damage: The absence of a complete Habitats Regulations Assessment leaves unanswered questions about the impacts on protected species and biodiversity. Further, proposed mitigation measures are vague and insufficient.

AONB Threat: The site's proximity to the Kent Downs AONB will result in significant visual and environmental degradation. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment requires substantial updates to reflect the true scale of harm.

3. Infrastructure Strain

Sellindge's infrastructure is already under immense pressure, and this development would exacerbate these issues:

Healthcare Deficiency: The proposed GP surgery lacks confirmed funding or operational guarantees. Meanwhile, existing facilities are already overstretched.

Traffic and Safety Concerns: Increased traffic on the A20 will heighten risks for pedestrians and schoolchildren. The current access proposals are inadequate and fail to mitigate these risks effectively.

Drainage and Flooding: Historical issues with sewerage and surface water flooding remain unresolved. The proposed drainage solutions are unproven and insufficient.

4. Community Opposition

The overwhelming opposition from residents highlights the unsuitability of this proposal.

Key objections include:

Overdevelopment: Sellindge has endured extensive new housing developments, far exceeding its capacity to integrate further growth without significant harm.

Loss of Village Character: The scale and density of the proposed development will fundamentally alter the rural and community-focused identity of Sellindge.

Strain on Resources: Schools, roads, and utilities are already struggling to cope. This development will lead to further deterioration in the quality of life for residents.

5. Proposal Deficiencies

The application's lack of detail and poor design further underscore its unsuitability:

Vague Commitments: The outline nature of the application provides insufficient assurances about the delivery of critical infrastructure and high-quality design.

Poor Integration: The proposed community centre and local services fail to integrate meaningfully with existing infrastructure, reducing their potential benefits.

Inadequate Open Space: The development's emphasis on car parking over green spaces reflects a failure to prioritize community and environmental needs.

6. Irreversible Harm

Approval of this application would result in irreversible harm to the village of Sellindge. The loss of countryside, increased traffic congestion, strained resources, and degradation of quality of life are too high a price to pay. It is clear that this development is not in the best interests of the community.

Conclusion

We strongly urge the council to reject this application in its entirety. Sellindge deserves sustainable, well-planned growth that respects its character, environment, and community. This proposal fails on all counts and represents a significant threat to the future of our village.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Sellindge Parish Council Planning Committee