Response to planning application WA/2023/01924

Provided by Zoe Stroud Centre Manager of Sayers Croft Outdoor Residential Activity Centre, Westminster City Council (WCC)

15th September 2023

WCC opposes the planning proposal for 6 self-build dwellings planned for the green space adjacent to Sayers Croft Field Centre. The damage to a highly valued historic and community resource is well documented in the responses of the 20th Century Society, Ewhurst Parish Council responses and local residents. I would therefore like to comment on the material damage the development will have to Sayers Croft’s operation:

**Proposal is unable to define what will be built:** The proposals masterplan and landscape plan only states how the development *could* be carried forward. On paper the landscape plan contains a lot of green with mature plantings of trees, but it’s only what could be, not what we might actually see developed, which will be in the hands of the 6 independent buyers. Sayers Croft and the neighbours adjacent to this field may end up with a very urban looking development.

**Previous rejections:** Impact of the development does not differ from the 2018 and 2014 schemes on the same site that was rejected at appeal by a planning Inspector due to significant negative impact the development would have on the historic environment of Sayers Croft and the rural feel of this side of the village and the prevention of urban spread towards Cranleigh.

**Effect on heritage assets**: Damage will be done to the rural context of the grade 2 listed Dining Hall which houses 2 registered war memorials (memorial register 23559). The building and the memorials are of particular note as they record the affect that Sayers Croft’s rural setting had on the evacuee children from urban backgrounds. These memorials are especially of note as they remember the home front and were made by the children that experienced the conflict first hand.

**Impact on children visiting site:** Children too young or physically unable to reach our main activity sites up to 15 minutes walk from the central facilities are able to benefit from our service in the woodland and pond adjacent to the proposed development. This site is directly against the field boundary of the houses and as such we would be unable to offer this as a viable natural site. The loss of this site would be of key concern to the community as it is used on a regular basis by Ewhurst infants and no suitably alternative location for the activities is available.

**Length of impact on children visiting site:** This proposal does not detail the construction timeline as it is only for planning permission for self- build plots. There can be no timescale for the time taken to sell the plots and then length of build, so in reality we could be facing construction dragging on for many years , which will negatively impact the experience of our current visitors, but also the rural feel of this side of the village as construction traffic becomes a long term prospect.

**Child protection:** Over 20,000 children visit Sayers Croft annually, a key selling point for the site is it’s secure location that is not overlooked at any point on its boundary by housing. The proposed development would put buildings on a high elevation to the centre with clear views into both activity and residential areas of the centre. This risk would not be controllable by the centre and would be of significant concern to our visiting group leaders.

**Impact of activity on new residents:** Sayers Croft is a residential centre operating 24hrs a day throughout the whole of the year. Activities are offered into the night with many sessions happening against the shared boundary. Currently with no adjoining housing to the centre the noise created by such sessions has little impact on the wider community. Residents to the new houses would be negatively impacted by our activity on a daily basis both early in the morning and late at night. Our Fire alarm drill also operates regularly throughout the week and weekend. As with all educational and work premises, our fire system could be triggered at any time, resulting in prolonged sirens which would negatively impact new residents.

**Previous issues:** During the course of this and previous planning developments of Penlan Sayers Croft has been impacted by trespassing, fly tipping, and burning of hazardous waste along the shared boundary. It is of great concern from a safety and reputational view point that such activity would only increase should construction go ahead.