st matthew's

St Matthew's Church

The Revd Mary Parish, Associate Vicar
The Heritage, 10, Winchester Road,
Worthing. BN11 4DJ
[redacted]

WORTHING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING SECTION
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Worthing Borough Council
Planning Regeneration & Wellbeing
Portland House, Richmond Road
Worthing
West Sussex BN11 1LF
attn. Marie O'Keeffe

29th November 2009

Dear Sirs,

I write concerning the planning proposals for Ravenswood, at 18 Winchester Road (**Application No: WB/09/0932/FULL**). My husband and I are members of the Winchester Road Residents' Association, and I have read the carefully researched and carefully expressed letter on behalf of our Association which you will receive with this.

We have lived in Winchester Road for 17 years, and have been extremely concerned at the number of elderly care homes which have been closed and then taken over as homes for mental health care in the community. The quite extraordinary density of these homes in this immediate area gives the lie to the concept of "care in the community", the community itself being scarcely existent as a result of this concentration. I personally know families who have moved out of the road largely because of the difficulty of raising young children in what can be a very volatile area. I cannot fathom why there is no "change of use" involved in an elderly care home being transformed into a mental health unit – the two are very different.

Ravenswood, as you are aware, was closed, thereby at least diminishing this problem a little. However, the current proposal for the re-structuring of part of the premises is a clear indicator that the home is expected to re-open. It seems very strange that the residents have not been consulted concerning this (nor, incidentally, have I received a planning letter concerning the extension). I am very well aware, especially perhaps in my particular position in the community, of considerable unrest and dissatisfaction with this situation. I cannot see why a department of local government known as "Planning" does not appear to take into consideration the amenities and residents of an area when making such a far-reaching decision as this. Many feel harassed and unsafe here, and the knowledge that this particular group of homes (Sunkist Homes Ltd) has not been under the kind of management which has ensured safety and comfort for its neighbours is far from promising. Shouting, littering, offensive behaviour and emergency night-calls have all contributed to a sense that this is no longer a community – certainly not a community able to support yet more "care" of this variety in its midst. Rather, it results in a diminished community beset by anxiety.

My concern, as a local priest, is for the whole community; those caught in the web of mental health issues and those living a "normal" life both within and out of the local community. Planning decisions such as the one we fear here do no justice to either group. I believe that there needs to be a far more stringent examination of the ability of the proprietors to run the current homes adequately, and no planning decision should be made to extend their remit unless such examination is acceptable to local parties. Surely this is the basic task of a "Planning Department"? Therefore in view of all I have said it is particular important that you pay attention to the conditions proposed by the RA if you see fit to approve this application.

Yours faithfully,

[redacted]

Mary E Parish (Revd.Mrs.)