1, Highview
Sompting.
West Sussex
BN15 0QW

Date: 15th May, 2016.

Your Reference: AWDM/0641/16

Dear Mr G Peck & Ms Claire Pink,

Re: 37 Highivew Sompting Lancing West Sussex

I am the owner of 1, Highview which is the property immediately due North and across the road from 37 Highview. I wish to make the following comments on the planning application proposal:

(1) Barn ends to Gable:
The only noticeable feature change to directly affect my property (1, Highview) has been the change in barn end to gable roofline and two velux windows. I see this as a positive change which has made the property in keeping with the property next door and other similar shaped properties on the estate. This gives an unbroken roof scape line along the row of houses on the South of our estate. Previously, this house looked odd on its own with barn ends at the end of the row of houses.

From a practical point of view these barn ends are high maintenance. They have high guttering which requires an extended ladder to reach and clean out. They also present a further problem of birds nesting high up and penetrating the loft space. Removal of these barn ends is a positive move and reduces maintenance costs for the property owner.

I congratulate the builder's architect who has put tiles at the apex of the gable ends to give the illusion of a barn end whilst keeping the straight line roof scape. This is a positive improvement to the character of the building whilst improving the practicality of the building maintenance and maximizing the size and increasing the value of the property and that of the area.

(2) Rear Dormers:
This is the third property situated adjacent to Halewick Lane which is a two story property and has a dormer in its roof. There are other two other properties in Halewick lane which have dormers on the second floor which are significantly larger than those being proposed in this application: one is located the other end of Halewick lane and the other one central to Halewick lane, both of these dormers are on the front elevation and are much more intrusive than what is being proposed.

I would also point you to the large number of dormers in Howard road sitting at an elevation much higher than 37 Highview, these dormers are located on both front and real elevations. There are also dormers to the east of the Highview estate. Local precedent has already been established in abundance within sight of this property and all around the Highview estate. The Highview estate is the only area where the "no dormer" rule seems to apply.

The proposed small cottage dormers are indeed very small, smaller than those within sight of this property. The proposed dormers fit neatly under the flat roof scape line and do not alter the shape and feel of the building. Indeed they add character to what is visually very flat and bland shaped roof. The architect and owners have (at significant financial cost) made considerable compromise to meet the concerns of previous planning objections over the current standard dormer construction, a dormer which is apparent both in shape and size on many other buildings within sight of this property.

These cottage dormers certainly do not look out of character with the building and other modern estate developments with similar second story dormers I could point to in Burgess Hill, Portslade and Angmering.

The proposed dormer specifications are well within recent government permitted development regulations. In terms of practicality, these proposed dormers unfortunately do not make efficient use of the roof space in comparison to the current structure. The owners are going to suffer a significant downgrade in space, headroom and comfort, which is very unfortunate for no particular planning reason which is brought about by sound judgment in consideration of this this planning application on its own account.

I now have one negative comment on these dormers. They should definitely not have obscured glass. I see no point in this proposal whatsoever. The surrounding properties are already overlooked from the first floor of this building and if anything the overlooking view from these proposed smaller dormers would be less that that seen from the first floor windows. I would see obscured glass as looking really odd from both inside and outside the building. The immediate question would be, why would someone have to accept obscured windows? This is modification makes no practical sense whatsoever and as I see it the owners have been given no option into accepting this as a compromise.

(3) Planning proposal in terms of local area and past planning strategy:
Within a few hundred yards of 37 Highivew, there must be in excess of 200 dormers of varying shape, size and quality of build. This must be one of the highest density areas for property dormers in Sussex. From what I see, it is clear that the architect and owners have made every effort to make the roof of 37 Highview look far better than any of the other flat roofed dormers in the area. This adds character and value to the area, making the property worthy of comment as you walk by.

The irony is that the Highview estate is totally out of keeping with the whole area because it doesn't have any dormers in the roofs of the properties. One has to look at the dreadful amount of poor quality flat roofed dormers sited on the bungalows in the local area. This in itself shows you how local planning strategy has failed to make a difference blending property with landscape in what quite clearly is an incredible mess. The skyline of the bungalows in Sompting is an absolute eyesore and disgrace when viewed from a distance, which can only be reflective of the ineffectiveness of the Parish Council and local planning control. I would regard these proposed "cottage dormers" on 37 Highview as an example of dormers which are pleasing on the eye, add value and character as opposed the numerous flat boxes which blight the house rooflines of the local area.

(4) Previous applications and Government change in planning law:
There have been a number of planning applications for dormers on the Highview estate all have been rejected on account of S/71/86/TP/10215 which is long outdated. I would like the planning department and the Sompting Parish Council to take full note and respect recent government legislation (an Act of Parliament) was put in place and passed to expedite small development on the rear of people's property and to prevent the red tape of planning control "nit picking" and blocking of perfectly reasonable structures on account of unelected individuals opinion alone. This is the will of Parliament.

I now refer to the "elephant in the room". On no planning rejection for dormer applications for Highview properties do you see the words "No dormers will be permitted". The reason for this is the planning Authority cannot make such a ruling, because there is no such planning law. Instead planning hides the "no dormer" rule behind other weasel words. But this is what the planning strategy for Highview is.

The root problem of this planning application is one of precedent. The local Authority see's that if approval is to allow permission on one property, it will have to allow other dormers on the estate. But the planning Authority will not make the statement and we have to go through the nausea and pain of successive planning applications and appeals.

In my opinion in this case, this planning application will fail on it's second attempt. It will then go to final appeal and on this occasion, the appeal will almost certainly be successful. The simple reason being that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with this planning application and the owners have made considerable compromise and rectified all concerns in full.

This will in my opinion call into question the competence of both the Parish Council and the local Planning Authority in handling this matter. One must also call into question the stress of what this is having on the family concerned.

The Highview estate is a group of freehold properties, the title deeds of which have been bought and paid for in full. The owners have the right to fair and reasonable planning applications. It is somewhat unfair to place the rule of "no dormers" on an estate which is surrounded by properties with dormers. This in my opinion is an abuse of planning control.

From a positive and forward thinking perspective, with the right design, the Highview estate could be very much enhanced and improved with such cottage style dormers making the area look quaint and attractive. Planning should be encouraging and working with people in the area to make their properties look more attractive. I would say these cottage dormers being proposed are about right, add value and add character.

Alternatively, with a negative view and rearward perspective, you could continue this no dormer rule and hold the area back in comparison to other estates like Burgess Hill, Portslade and Angmering, where planning control is much more engaged forward thinking and where there are Parish Councils acting positively to embrace change and improve the attractiveness of the local area.

After giving this matter some serious consideration, I can find and have no overriding objection to this planning application being approved for the reasons given above.

Thank you

Yours Sincerely,

[redacted]

Andrew Bland

Chartered Engineer