

Comments to Balcombe Parish Council:

At the public consultation in June, I was disappointed to see that the Parish Council were presenting the proposed development on Julian's Smith's land as 'the most popular choice'. This was based on a relatively small number of responses from the previous consultation in December. This Balcombe House and Rectory Gardens development proposal was the most 'vague' of them all, and not supported by the same detailed plans as the developments proposed by the Balcombe Estate. Perhaps this is why it was the easiest one to 'sell' to the residents of Balcombe. No details, just keep it vague, show them some unrelated sketches, pictures of some other houses with ridiculous chimneys and tiny area plans with no details and don't make it clear that there is also a plan to demolish the Rectory.

Even worse, at the consultation in June, proposals for this site had changed but there were no plans or elevations available at the consultation to show the details of any aspect of it or make proper evaluation of the scheme possible for the average Balcombe resident. It's hard enough for people to visualise and properly appreciate what a development will actually look like, and the space it will take, even if they do have detailed plans.

I was also told conflicting stories by Julian Smith and members of the planning committee about what a development on this site would include. According to Mr Smith, a parking area for cars is intended to run alongside the road frontage, opposite the triangular green. This was not evident at the consultation, and the planning committee appeared not to know about it. I only found this out by talking to Mr Smith at length. I also found out that he cares about the view from these intended houses to the extent that it would prevent him from leaving the existing belt of trees for screening purposes. He did admit however that he originally had the trees planted because he 'didn't want a view of the road' from his house. (Actually I would rather see his beautiful house than what we are likely to get if this site is chosen for new houses) Retaining the existing trees and not building there would be even better.

It really is not fair to tell us that this is the development that most people favour when nobody can know what it actually comprises.

Building here would change Balcombe and destroy its character more than any other proposal. The sight of new houses and their driveways and cars would be intrusive, unpleasant and unavoidable.

Also, it is not fair that a 'local' pressure group at the south end of the village can determine that the Vintens site, preferred by Balcombe Estate, be discounted early on. This has ruined the possibility of the best choice for Balcombe as a whole, being made.

If the Council is serious about supporting its stated policy to encourage walking and cycling, building at Vintens would be fine, it's not that far away. Development does not have to be symmetrical about the village centre - people tend to use their cars now wherever they live. Julian Smith told me that building at Vintens was discounted because it was 'unsustainable' which he said meant it was 'too far from the village centre', so what exactly is true?

Another reason given for building houses from the church to the Half Moon was that the

church needs to be 'more included in the village'. Why does it suddenly need to be more 'included' in the village?

Regarding the burial ground. Apparently, and to his credit, Julian Smith offered part of his land for a burial ground extension at some point in the past. Unfortunately the proposal was opposed by Balcombe Estate on the grounds that the drive to their cottage just to the north (Haylor's Cottage?) would then be too close to the burial ground. However, I think that this idea could be made to work. If Balcombe Estate could move the driveway to the other (north) side of the cottage and put in a screening hedge, a good solution would result. This would also be much better and cheaper than plonking a burial ground extension on the other side of the road and adding to it a horrible and unnecessary car park.

I would have preferred that the Council resist the pressure to build more houses, using the AONB as the reason, but this was not done. There will always be more people who want to live here than there are houses for. We are lucky to live in a beautiful rural village, though not everyone who responds to your questionnaire will do so with much thought about the aspects of Balcombe which make it special and which are easily lost.

Yours faithfully,

Jane Fitzpatrick.