

07/11/2023

Joseph Swift
Planning Department
Mid Sussex District Council
Oaklands Road, Haywards Heath
West Sussex,
RH16 1SS

SPECIALIST LANDSCAPE ADVICE

Thank you for requesting advice on this pre-application advice from Place Services' landscape advice service. This service provides advice to planning officers to inform Mid Sussex District Council planning decisions with regard to potential landscape impacts from development. Any additional information, queries or comments on this advice that the applicant or other interested parties may have, must be directed to the Planning Officer who will seek further advice from us where appropriate and necessary.

Application: DM/23/2610
Location: Land South Of Hanlye Lane Longacre Crescent Cuckfield West Sussex
Proposal: Residential development of 55 dwellings with vehicular and pedestrian access, car parking, open space, play space, landscaping and all other associated works

Dear Joseph,

Thank you for consulting the Landscape Advisor to Mid Sussex District Council on the above pre-application.

With reference to the above-named application and submitted documents received by Place Services on the 18/10/2023 asking for Landscape comments, our comments are made below.

Summary

Not supportive on landscape grounds	
Supportive subject to attached recommendations and / or conditions	X
Further information required prior to determination	
No landscape comments / does not wish to comment	

We recognise the policy position of the Site under SA23 of the Mid Sussex Site Allocations (2022) and consider that the LVIA successfully assesses the potential impact of the development on the local landscape. We have however made a number of recommendations that address some of our initial concerns regarding the coalescence of the two villages and other considerations for the design of the scheme.

Site Context

The application is for 55 dwellings located to the north-east of Cuckfield village and on the northern edge of Hanlye Road. The Site comprises two grassland fields with trees, scrub and two public rights of way crossing, which includes the Sussex Diamond Way. The Site is bound by vegetation on all sides creating an enclosed landscape.

The High Weald AONB is located north of the Site on the opposite side of Hanlye Road. Two parcels of Ancient Woodland are located directly adjacent to the south-eastern corner of the Site.

Planning Policy

Mid Sussex Site Allocations Development Plan (2022)

The Site is allocated within SA23 'Land at Hanlye Lane to the east of Ardingley Road, Cuckfield'. The allocations objectives include providing a high quality, landscape led, sustainable extension to Cuckfield and enhances the setting of the High Weald AONB.

Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan (CNP) (2014)

The Site is located within the zone subject to Policy CNP3 'Preventing Coalescence between Cuckfield and Haywards Heath', where development is not permitted outside the built-up area boundary if it contributes to the coalescence between the two villages. This also includes increasing the density of development between the two curtilages.

Under Policy CNP5 'Protect and Enhance the Countryside', the Site falls within key external view 5, where maintaining the distinctive views of the surrounding countryside from public vantage points is important. The Site is located within view of View 5. The High Weald AONB is also located directly adjacent to the Site on the opposite side of Hanlye Road.

Cuckfield Landscape Character Assessment (2012)

The Site is located with the northern section of [LCA 13 'Horsegate Farmland'](#) which is part of the Gap Local Policy area. This LCA is characterised by medieval assarts, informal parkland, undulating land, farmyards, well vegetated boundaries and good enclosure and PRoWs. The LCA is assessed as having moderate value and substantial sensitivity, with low capacity for development owed to forming the separation between Cuckfield and Haywards Heath.

Review of submitted information

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been undertaken by LVIA Ltd. The LVIA has made reference to the principles set out within the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' Third Edition (GLVIA3) prepared by the Landscape Institute (LI) and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), however the submitted LVIA has not consistently followed the guidelines for undertaking the assessment.

The viewpoint photography (Pages 29-36) has not been undertaken in alignment with LI TGN 06/19: 'Visual Representation of Development Proposals'. Clearly identifying the selected Visualisation Type within the LVIA in accordance with TGN 06/19 (Para 3.7.5) would have been appreciated for review.

As acknowledged in the LVIA, the Site visit and photography used to inform the assessment were undertaken in summer (August 2023) and the LVIA recognises that the photographs do not represent the worst-case scenario in Paragraph 11.1.13. It is best practice to undertake photography assessment in winter.

Despite being subject to Policy CNP3 'Preventing Coalescence between Cuckfield and Haywards Heath' and being located within an LCA with low capacity for development, the Site has been allocated within the Mid Sussex Site Allocations Development Plan (2022) under Site Allocation 23. Whilst we recognise the policy position of the allocation, incorporating and considering the sensitive features of the landscape is particularly important in this instance.

Landscape Character

The LVIA makes reference to The West Sussex Landscape Land Management Guidelines and LCA HW4 (High Weald Fringes) and A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex and LCA 10 (High Weald Fringes). The Site possesses a number of key characteristics including the wooded confined landscape, significant woodland cover and assart fields.

Cuckfield Landscape Character Assessment has not been referenced within the assessment, which is key in assessing the impact on landscape character for the proposed development from a localised perspective. Considering the judged moderate value, substantial sensitivity, and low capacity for development within LCA 13 'Horsegate Farmland', we would have expected the LVIA to reference and include this within the assessment.

Whilst an assessment is provided of the susceptibility, value and sensitivity of identified landscape receptors (including vegetation pattern, land use, settlement pattern, designations, overall character), we would expect this level of assessment to be provided for each of the landscape character areas (LCA) identified within the Baseline (Section 8.2).

Visual Effects

The assessment has identified 12 receptors, located on public rights of way (PRoW) and surrounding roads in the landscape. Considering the characteristic well-defined field boundaries, we agree with the selected viewpoints and the localised assessment the LVIA provides.

We would however have appreciated the inclusion of annotations to illustrate the extent of development and the total site area within the photographs. We would also have appreciated the location maps of each viewpoint to be displayed on the same page as the viewpoint photography for easy review.

Table 15 provides a Summary and Comparison Residual Visual Significance of Effect (Page 46). Given the topographical nature of the site and natural vegetated buffer which intercepts potential visual receptors of the proposed development, we agree with the overall judgements and conclusions made

that views are limited to the PROWs and Hanlye Lane which are in close proximity of the Site, based on the operational phase and residual phase (Year 15).

We therefore judge that the LVIA provides an appropriate assessment of the landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development in this location.

Conclusion

We recognise the policy position of the Site under SA23 of the Mid Sussex Site Allocations (2022) and consider that the LVIA successfully assesses the potential impact of the development on the local landscape. We have made several recommendations that seek to address our initial concerns regarding the coalescence of the two villages and other considerations for the design of the scheme.

If minded for approval, we advise the following recommendations are considered:

- The Cuckfield Landscape Character Area (2012) states that the areas has an enclosed nature with minor urban influences with limited development. Considering the Site is located outside of the built-up area boundary (BUAB), the vegetated enclosed nature of the Site can be utilised within the soft landscaping to mitigate against the impacts of the urban area extending into countryside. Therefore, the southern boundary could be enhanced with further tree planting which extends into the public open space.
- Whilst we support the inclusion of three attenuation basins located within the public open space (POS), there are substantial opportunities available for planting within the basins to integrate the SuDS system into the POS and create an ecological habitat. For this reason, we would recommend that additional planting is proposed. This should include shrubs and trees that are tolerant to both drought and water logging conditions.
- Reconfiguration of the turning heads which project into the public open space could be explored to lessen their impact.
- Considering the inclusion of a public open space and a green spine within the soft landscaping for the scheme, there are opportunities to include natural play which can be distributed throughout the open areas.
- We recommend the visitor spaces are also proposed as block paving and include additional landscape planting, in the interest of visual amenity.
- A green roof species mix has been included on the Planting Schedule however this is not included on the key to indicate where this may be proposed within the soft landscape plans.
- Different options and surface treatments should be explored for the proposed crossing of the swale within the green spine, since the proposed bitmac surface does not match the crushed aggregate hoggins or block paving used on either side.



- The Proposed Site Layout Presentation includes a number of indicative hedgerows and planting surrounding the visitor parking bays and adjacent to the roadways. We recommend that some of these are applied to the submitted Hard and Soft Landscape Proposals.

Yours sincerely,

Megan Cowell BA (Hons) MA
Landscape Consultant

Place Services provide landscape advice on behalf of Mid Sussex District Council.

Please note: This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter.