

Urban Design Observations

To: Development Management, Stuart Malcolm

From: Anna Kramarczyk-Dillon, Architect/Urban Designer, Mid Sussex DC

Application ref: DM/25/3067

Date: 19/01/26

Address: Land West Of Kings Business Centre, Reeds Lane, Sayers Common, West Sussex

Description: Erection of 80 new residential dwellings (Use Class C3), including affordable housing units, vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access (including new footpath links to the east and west of the site along Reeds Lane), landscaping and open space, parking, sustainable drainage and other related works.

Stage: Planning application.

This scheme would be one of several allocated sites to be developed in this village (a total growth of circa 2,400 dwellings within Sayers Common over the Local Plan period).

The revised layout represents an improvement over the initial submission; however, further refinement is essential to achieve the desired standard.

Layout

The layout mostly accords with the principles of the Council's Design Guide. It benefits from a perimeter block arrangement organised so that the building frontages face the attractive boundary trees which also form the backdrop to the public realm, main access point and incorporated Public Right of Way.

In response to the Framework Masterplan wider connectivity was executed quite well:

- The main vehicular/pedestrian access to the site is through the southeast corner; this links up to the existing footway and provides a direct access to the next-door Business Centre and the village.
- Additional pedestrian connections were provided to the neighbouring settlement to the north-east, and a new footpath crossing the ditch at the south-west corner was proposed to facilitate any future development.

The parking is now more discreetly accommodated especially near and around the open spaces and the main access roads.

The layout can be criticised for not fully responding to the potential of the next-door Business Centre. Given that the Business Park will be increasingly surrounded by residential development, there is a strong likelihood that its role and function may evolve to meet changing local needs.

I acknowledge that the layout has been improved and that it allows for a potential future connection at the north-west corner of the Business Centre. However, in my view, orienting so many of the plots to back onto the Eastern Access Lane limits permeability and integration of the Business Centre. This represents a missed opportunity.

Elevations

While the elevations are consistent, they feel generic, and the architectural language fails to push forward, marking yet another missed opportunity.

Overall Assessment and Recommended changes:

As proposed, I do not support the application. I would only be able to offer my support if changes are made. I would recommend following improvements:

- Plot 37-44; L-shape building.
Current 'skewed' arrangement goes too far and has a detrimental impact on the streets and spaces, resulting in a fragmented street layout. It creates large gaps between buildings, resulting in unwanted views into rear elevations and towards the retaining wall. It also disturbs the viewing line along the PRoW.
To create a clear and coherent urban structure, improve wayfinding, and contribute to a stronger sense of place: align the L-shape block more closely with the proposed building lines along the main spine roads and redesign the open green space in front of the building for more meaningful space for gathering and play. Add more interest to the elevation in this key building. Use self-supporting balconies.
- Units 24/25, 33/34: redesign to provide direct access from all units to their private outdoor space.
- Unit 8, add fenestration to the first-floor eastern elevation; improve and add interest to this highly exposed flank by grouping the windows vertically with the projecting bay.
- Unit 5: increase sizes of the windows to the Living Room, redesign to provide direct access from the unit to its garden.
- Unit 60, provide window to the first floor (side elevation facing south).
- Plots 51, 52, 63, 64, 68, correct the elevations; there seem to be a mistake and side elevations with windows don't 'face out' to the street.
- Plots 16-17, 49-50 & 61-62, correct the elevations; there seem to be a mistake, windows on side elevations are well placed on the plans but not shown correctly on the elevations.
- Update and correct Material Plan. Current plan shows units with inconsistent application of the secondary facing materials peeling on the edges.
- Provide separate boundary treatment plan and update street elevations accordingly. Our expectation would be that any wall facing a public realm will be a solid brick wall.
- To ensure the long-term protection of the trees, please clarify which trees will be under whose responsibility. A plan should be provided clearly identifying public and private ownership across the site.