

Urban Design Observations

To: Development Management

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

Application ref: DM/25/0827

Date: 03/04/25

Address: Fox Hill, Haywards Heath, West Sussex

Description: Outline planning application for the erection of up to 130 dwellings, together with the change of use of an existing barn for a flexible community and/or commercial use, along with associated outdoor space and landscaping, drainage infrastructure, hard and soft landscaping, parking, access and associated works (all matters reserved except for access). Site Address: Land East Of Lunce's Hill, Fox Hill, Haywards Heath, West Sussex

Stage: Outline planning. All matters reserved except for access.

The site is not allocated for development through the adopted development plan.

The site covers an area of approx. 8.81 hectares to the east of Lunce's Hill, situated at the southern end of Haywards Heath, West Sussex. Approximately 6.95 hectares of the site fall within the jurisdiction of Lewes District Council (LDC), while the remaining 1.86 hectares are under the jurisdiction of Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC).

Both planning authorities are engaged in consultations

This is an outline scheme in which appearance, design, landscaping and scale are reserved matters. Being an outline proposal, the scheme is short of information. This makes it difficult to assess its design merits in detail.

Urban Design Principles that should apply:

- (A) Optimise the potential of the site through the masterplan process, whilst establishing a strong sense of place which is sympathetic to the landscape setting and character of Cleavewaters (Graded II Listed Building) and its curtilage. Provide focus by incorporating a central open space with a higher density of housing in close proximity.
- (B) Ensure the site maximises connectivity with the any potential settlements to the north of Hurtswood Lane and existing settlements surrounding the site and maintains a permeable layout throughout.
- (C) Retain and enhance existing established trees and other landscape features and weave them into green infrastructure / open space / movement strategy that encourages pedestrian and cycle use.
- (D) Development shall be orientated to have a positive edge with the countryside, Lunce's Hill road, any PRow, and proposed public open space, with buildings

fronting onto the tree lined field boundaries to provide an attractive backdrop and avoid trees overshadowing back gardens.

- (E) Optimise the potential offered by the Pellingford Brook and the potential surrounding flood risk buffer, including the siting of any necessary flood attenuation ponds to create an attractive edge to the development and additional recreation area.
- (F) The development should be directed away from areas of flood risk.

Plus points

- (D) Perimeter blocks – positive frontages facing the attractive tree lined boundaries – makes them an attractive feature and safeguards them.
- Parking is generally well-integrated, ensuring it does not dominate the public realm.
- Corner buildings mostly appear to address the return frontage.
- (B) Linkages – The new footpath at the site entrance is connected to the existing footpath network.

Issues

- (D) Perimeter blocks – A cluster of large homes with very small gardens (13. Farmstead Style Dwellings) would benefit from being arranged in a style consistent with the other perimeter blocks. Additionally, creating a looped road would help safeguard any potential dwellings that may be developed in the large back gardens to the northwest.
- (B) Linkages – risk of being a very long cul de sac and car reliant. I would encourage the applicant to explore legal methods for establishing much needed direct pedestrian connections to the Hurtswood Lane or Colwell Lane.
- (D) Central open space. More could be done to achieve a more meaningful space: create detailed landscape plan and include play spaces. If flats to be introduced: allowing the flats to define the central focal space also gives some idea of a notional centre that seems to be lacking / Lack of hierarchy.
- (D) If flats to be introduced, they are better located adjacent to the open spaces as the residents don't have the benefit of private gardens. I would suggest using L-shaped buildings with rear court parking to maximize space efficiency and enhance the overall layout.
- (F) The development should be directed away from areas of flood risk. To mitigate the surface water flood: surface water floor depths need to be identified. Applicant should consider how to manage surface water to minimise flood risk and flows to watercourses. Development proposals should normally incorporate sustainable urban drainage (SuDs) as an integral part of the landscape structure. SuDs should be positively designed into schemes from the outset as public realm features. These features can include ponds, infiltration basins, swales/rain gardens and wetlands as they reduce demand on the sewer network. The amount of the open space required for SUD's will likely have an impact on the presented layout.
- Legibility - The building lines along the primary road are inconsistent, with front threshold parking dominating the most prominent corner openings. I recommend removing front threshold parking along the primary access road, particularly at the corners marked below in blue. Employ side parking, with garages and rear court parking. To improve the scheme's legibility, employ L-shape corner buildings.



- Legibility - Introduce more trees at the street corners of the primary road, ensuring sufficient space for lighting along the main route.
- Legibility: Ensure buildings are of an appropriate scale to frame the primary street, with a suitable height-to-width ratio.
- Landscape design: Introduce resting and meeting spaces throughout the scheme, particularly along Pellingford Brook.
- Introduce additional garages or carports to visually bridge the larger gaps between the buildings.
- Landscape design - Barn Conversion: Enhance the car park with additional vegetation for screening. Soften the rear car park area and retain the existing boundary wall facing the main street.
- Additional information on the land's topography is required to fully evaluate the scheme. Specifically, long street elevations and cross-sections would be beneficial.