

Urban Design Observations

To: Development Management, Steven King

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

Application ref: DM/26/0131

Date: 11/03/2026

Address: Land South And West Of Upper Imberhorne School Imberhorne Lane East
Grinstead West Sussex

Description: Approval of Reserved Matters following Outline Planning Permission (Ref. DM/23/2699) relating to appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for 550no. new residential units.

Stage: Planning; Reserved matters.

The proposed scheme has addressed most of the concerns raised in the previous consultations. I agree with the DRP comments, particularly those complementing the improvements to the layout, including the realignment of blocks to terminate vistas, the provision of more generous play space, and the increased perimeter around the open space.

Other key positive points include:

- The overall layout is generally good incorporating well-defined streets and overlooked and legible routes that connect the development well to its surrounds.
- The future mixed-use centre is centrally located and well-connected to the main open space. The increase in its plot size is also welcomed.
- Strategic considerations such as parking layout, street design, and density have been incorporated into the reserved matters.
- A well-integrated and appropriately sized open space has been designed and now forms the heart of the development, supporting community use and reinforcing the overall layout alongside the proposed primary school and mixed-use centre.
- Permeability was improved by linking routes.
- Connections with the exiting settlement were opened up and improved.
- Hypothetical layout/elevations/3D massing (desktop study) for a mixed-use development integrating an NHS GP practice/commercial uses, and for the primary school were presented
- Layout has a clear hierarchy of street with Parking that does not dominate the main spine road.
- Parking is mostly discreetly accommodated between the buildings, with parking spaces not projecting beyond the building line.
- In secondary streets with threshold parking, tree planting reinforces the building line and emphasises the vertical rhythm of the streetscape.
- The lighting strategy has been coordinated with the trees.

However, there are a number of the elements that remain to be addressed before I can provide further comments.

The following improvements are recommended, and areas that require further consideration are highlighted below.

- Pedestrian movement and placemaking issues:
- Whilst the spine road was fixed by the outline permission, I agree with the Panel comment that the apparent length of the road could be broken up. For that purpose, introduce some of the following design tools: raised tables, lane shift, lane narrowing, pedestrian refuge islands, surface and material changes.
- There currently appears to be a complete lack of connection between the north and south sides of the main spine road along its entire length. To address this, explore introducing raised crosswalks, curb extensions, median refuge islands, tightening of the corner radius at the junctions, pedestrian crossings combined with surface and material enhancements, such as textured pavement (e.g., cobblestone or brick intersections), coloured crosswalks
- Mixed-used area, primary school and the central open space forms triangle of strong desire lines. It's particularly important to support pedestrian movement in this zone though the design and slowing down the traffic. Introduce passive (self-enforcing) traffic-calming design. Use geometry (lane shift, lane narrowing, pedestrian refuge island), surface treatment, and visual cues so drivers naturally slow down without relying on enforcement. Introduce raised crossings, contrasting pavement zones to clearly define pedestrian areas, bollards to reinforce pedestrian edge, surface and material enhancements, such as textured pavement (e.g., cobblestone or brick intersections), coloured crosswalks etc.

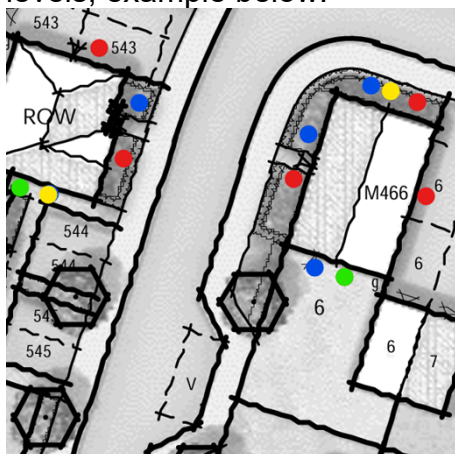
These measures will improve safety, slow down traffic, reduce traffic noise, and enhance accessibility across the spine road.

- Some other pedestrian crossings/links also need to be explained in more detail (see marked zone below).



- Smaller clusters of affordable housing would be more appropriate.
- Permeability issue: all ends of private/dead end drives should have a pedestrian link to the nearest public path. Furthermore, distances between the ends of the private drives should also be linked with a pedestrian link.
- Placemaking issue: There appears to be no lighting along the north-east and south-east pedestrian links to Imberhorne Road, and this should be addressed. Lighting should be provided to ensure safety and usability.
- Placemaking issue: Provide separate detailed drawing of the north-east link demonstrating a placemaking elements of the design (similar to drawing showing detailed design of zones 2001, 2002 and 2003 – or in other words drawings showing central open space, pocket of play and Leap to the north).
- Placemaking issue: Additionally, appropriate lighting should be provided in zones 2001, 2002, and 2003, as it also appears to have been omitted in these areas.
- Placemaking issue: Improve boundary treatments for all plots defined by front-of-plot parking (e.g., 100–115, 135–153, 172–173, 532–534). These plots require a clearer definition of defensible space along the front elevations. In addition to the proposed front planting, please include a low-level railing—either estate railing or timber post-and-rail, depending on the character area. This will better distinguish public pavement from private space and help prevent removal of shrubs or the storage of bins in front gardens. Please identify the relevant plots and apply the appropriate boundary treatment.
- Landscape structure: Where threshold parking is proposed (and trees were incorporated to reinforce a strong building line and emphasize vertical rhythm in the streetscape) ensure that the strip of land on which the trees are planted does not fall into private ownership, to prevent the potential loss of these trees. Provide a separate drawing demonstrating land ownership/control.
- Tarmac currently dominates the hard landscape.
 - all parking bays should instead be finished in block paving, with colours adjusted to suit the relevant character area.
 - Review the use of black tarmac and replace selected areas with coloured tarmac. One priority location is the cycle and pedestrian link from plots 47–55 to Imberhorne Lane to the east.
 - review tarmac finishes to the pavements, particularly along the main spine road and adjacent pavements. Introduce greater variety of surface materials to enhance visual quality and reduce uniformity.
- Other improvements to the layout: Plots 358, 357. Push forward for consistent building line, Plots 317, 316. Push forward for consistent building line, Large area of hardstanding to rear of Block D: soften with landscape, Plot 387, first floor flat, doesn't have direct access to garden: improve/redesign.
- Provide a separate plan showing positioning of air source heat pumps, solar panels or any other sustainability measures employed.
- The distribution of character areas seems appropriate. However, I would like to request more street scenes from the Core Area and the Principal Route. Please improve the 'grainy' key on each street scene drawing as it's not possible to read the annotations on some of them at the moment. Furthermore, identify elevations that need improvement (such as side elevation of plot 27, where windows should be vertically grouped, bay could be introduced and side gable could be introduced)

- Regarding the character areas, as an initial comment, I would suggest that in addition to facing materials/secondary materials/and roof finishes, mortar colour and window and door frame colours should also be used to reinforce the identity of each character area. I would suggest providing a separate plan for those.
- Materials Application Issue: Materials are still inconsistently applied and in places still appear to be 'peeling off' at building corners or returns (suggesting superficial application rather than integrated design).
- Material Palette Issue: Use of render as a facing material would not be supported. Render use on elevation shown on the latest drawings should be avoided as render does not age well unless well maintained.
Render is not a typical material used in Mid Sussex and therefore should be normally avoided, at least as the principal facing material. (Principle DG38: Design buildings with architectural integrity and a sense of place).
- For ease of reference, I would like to request a separate overall plan showing how the building fenestration is distributed throughout the layout. I would suggest Ground Floor FULL SIZE OPENING to be marked in 'blue' dot and FULL-SIZE UPPER LEVEL OPENING to be marked as red dot. SMALLER SIZES to be marked in 'yellow' at ground floor level and 'green' on upper levels; example below:



Please Note we would expect no blank flank wall facing the street and fenestration on the side elevation facing any twin carparking spaces between the houses.

- Provide Separate Plan showing positioning of air source heat pumps, solar panels and any other sustainability measures employed.

Other important notes:

- I would like to note that while potential concepts for the mixed-use area around the main open space have been illustrated, these will still need to be resolved in greater detail. In particular, parking solutions will require further consideration, as they can later prove problematic or unworkable without changes to the overall layout. These areas are among the most complex parts of the scheme in terms of balancing competing requirements while still delivering a high-quality public realm. It's important that parking won't dominate the main spine and buildings will be pushed forward for consistent building line.