

Notes of Mid Sussex Design Review Panel – 25 February 2026

Present: Mark Folkes (Chair), Jake White, Alice-Rose Hoile, Gavin Sargent

Apologies: Phil Winch

In attendance: Anna Kramarczyk (MSDC Urban Designer), Andy Watt (MSDC Senior Planning Officer), Catherine Cardin (MSDC Planning Officer) (observer)

Land south and west of Imberhorne Upper School, Imberhorne Lane, East Grinstead

Description of Scheme

Approval of Reserved Matters following Outline Planning Permission (Ref. DM/23/2699) relating to appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for 550no. new residential units (Application ref: DM/26/0131).

Presenters

Architect/Designers: Ben Baillie, Lilly Davis (Cooper Baillie Architects)
Landscape Architect: Annalies Earley (Green Landscape Design)
Planning Consultants: Kate Brocklebank, Chris Barker (ECE Planning)
Developers: Charlotte Handscomb (Vistry Homes Ltd)
Charlie Mulford, Estelle Hutchinson (David Wilson Homes)

In attendance

Ward Councillors: Cllr Lee Farren and Cllr Rex Whittaker
Case Officer: Steve King

The Panel's Comments

The Panel commended another great presentation with much thought given to a wide spectrum of issues. However, they expressed reservations about the repeated focus on layout at the expense of greater substance in respect of character areas, architectural detailing and sustainability.

Improvements to the layout from the previous scheme were supported, particularly the re-alignments of blocks to terminate vistas on trees and the more generous play space and perimeter around the open space. That said, greater detail was required to demonstrate that the play space would be both level and kept as naturalistic as possible, including minimising cut-and-fill.

The Panel considered this to be an incomplete scheme, and that the architecture lacked variation across the character areas, being of similar unit types and distinguished merely by different cladding. More information was required to demonstrate a convincing sense of place by way of, for example, a sequence of street scenes or visualisations, key moments, arrival, corner plots, side elevations, individual houses / mood boards and above all, greater detail on the materials, particularly if using flint or flint blocks.

The Panel noted that no sustainability analysis had been undertaken, and little had been presented that showed how the Panel's previous comments had been considered. The Panel urged the developers to commit to Future Homes Standard,

even though it is currently unclear when it will be adopted nationally. Positioning of air source heat pumps and solar panels should be identified at this stage, to retain the integrity of the scheme's appearance and to avoid noise issues for future residents. The main concern is that the buildings are not being designed for high insulation levels and overheating will consequently be an issue.

The Panel felt that the landscaping has the potential to be a real positive asset of this scheme, provided that:

- existing trees are not removed;
- new tree planting shown in private front gardens is secured long-term by a management company rather than left to the whims of future homeowners;
- confirmation is sought from WSCC regarding the number of trees that will be acceptable along the main spine road from a highway maintenance perspective and their agreement to a range of materials, including block paving

Again, the play and open spaces are considered to be really well thought through and commendably reflect climate resilience, particularly in terms of their water demand.

Overall Assessment

Support with amendments.