



26/02/2025

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Mid Sussex District Council
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SPECIALIST LANDSCAPE ADVICE

Thank you for requesting advice on this application 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/25/0016
Location: Land West Of Turners Hill Road And North Of Huntsland Turners Hill Road Crawley Down West Sussex
Proposal: Outline planning application (appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved) for the erection of up to 150 dwellings, a 65 bed care home, and community facility, and associated infrastructure including new access points off of Wychwood with associated spine road and car and cycle parking, together with provision of open space, play facilities, utilities infrastructure, surface water drainage features, and associated works.

Dear Steven,

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

Summary

The proposed development will cause permanent impacts on the landscape character which can be partially mitigated through some additional layout amendments and mitigation measures. We recognise the Reg 19 Allocation for Site DPA9 and judge that there is some capacity to accommodate development within the site. We advise that the recommendations included within this letter are considered and embedded in any proposals coming forward are considered to reduce the impacts on both the landscape character and the visual amenity.

Site Context

The application site is located to the west of Crawley Down village and comprises several undulating pasture fields which are surrounded by established vegetation and woodland. Farmsteads and isolated properties are

located in the surrounding countryside and appear close to the site boundaries. Public Rights of Way (PRoW) run along three of the four site boundaries.

Planning Context

Mid Sussex District Plan (MSDP) (Adopted March 2018)

Policies of considered relevance include [inter alia]:

- Policy DP12 Protection and Enhancement of Countryside
- Policy DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Policy DP22 Rights of Way and other Recreational Routes
- DP26 Character and Design
- Policy DP37 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- Policy DP38 Biodiversity.

The MSDP is currently being updated and reviewed. The Submission District Plan (Reg 19) identified the site as occupying **the northern half** in [DPA9](#) 'Land to the west of Turners Hill Road, Crawley Down' (SHELAA ref. 688). Policy requirements (relevant to landscape) include:

- *"2. Follow a sequential approach by directing development away from areas of flood risk and mitigate impacts through integration of SUDS to deliver biodiversity/environmental improvements and flood resilience.*
- *3. Address any impacts associated with Ancient Woodland (on and adjacent to the site) including Front Wood, Wallage Wood, Wallage Lodge Shaw, Bushy Wood, Pescotts Wood (east and west parcels), which will be excluded from development.*
- *4. Provide a woodland buffer to existing vegetation along the southern boundary and set development back from the Worth Way to mitigate potential visual impact to the route and help enhance its setting.*
- *5. Provide a 5m landscape buffer to existing hedgerows.*
- *6. Integrate and enhance the existing PRoWs within the site and retain the character of PRoWs that border the site.*
- *7. Provide suitable pedestrian and cycle connections to Crawley Down, including via the Worth Way.*
- *8. Integrate development with the site to the north (DPA10) such as through the design of the site layout and by providing pedestrian and cycling connections between the developments, green infrastructure and ecological corridors.*
- *9. Provide suitable access to Turners Hill Road to each of the three areas of the site. The northern access is to be via Wychwood Place and the middle access and route through site is to be separate from Huntsland which will remain a no through road and public right of way.*
- *10. Avoid development in the most sensitive areas, including the central ridge.*
- *11. Provide a country park in southern part of site and along western boundary linking the north and south parts of the site. It meets the requirements of other relevant development plan policies."*

Crawley Down Neighbourhood Plan (January 2016)

The following policies are considered relevant to this application:

- Policy CDNP 01 (Securing Sustainable Local Infrastructure)
- Policy CDNP 02 (Retention and Enhancement of Recreational and Local Green/Open Spaces)

- Policy CDNP 05 (Control of New Developments)
- CDNP 06 (SuDS)
- CDNP 08 (Coalescence)
- CDNP 09 (Protect and Enhance Biodiversity).

Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study (2007/2014)

The site is identified as located within Parcel 3 (Crawley Down Northern Fringe). The sensitivity of this character area is judged as **substantial**, owed to the substantial areas of woodland and intact hedgerows, well defined settlement boundary, sloping ground, significant areas of woodland links and contributes to prevention of increased coalescence with groups of scattered settlement. The landscape value is however judged as **slight** (2007), with a **medium capacity** (2014).

The 2014 study defines medium capacity as (Table 3.4, Page 47) *“there is the potential for limited smaller-scale development to be located in some parts of the character area, so long as there is regard for existing features and sensitivities within the landscape”*.

Review of Submitted Information

The application has been supported by the submission of a Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA) undertaken by SLR Consulting Limited. Overall, we generally agree with the submitted Methodology within Appendix A.

Landscape Character

The submitted LVIA references *National Character Area 122 (The High Weald)* of the Natural England National Character Areas (2014), *Landscape Character Area HW1 (High Weald)* of the West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (2005), *Landscape Character Area 6 (High Weald)* of the Landscape Character Assessment for Mid-Sussex (November 2005) and *Parcel 3 (Crawley Down Northern Fringe)* of the Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Assessment (HDA, July 2007).

Key characteristics of the Landscape Character Area 6 (High Weald) include wooded, confined rural landscape of intimacy and complexity, attractive, locally secluded and tranquil, drained by sinuous gill streams, long views over the Low Weald, significant woodland cover, sense of enclosure, pattern of small irregular assart fields, rich biodiversity.

A site visit was carried out on 20th February 2025 confirmed that the site is very characteristic of the local landscape character descriptions. As a representative landscape of the LCA increases the sensitivity of the site.

The LVIA sensitivity assessment of HW1 and Area 6 LCAs states that *“the site forms a small part of the wider High Weald landscape which is the largest of the character areas in the district”* (Table C-2). We disagree with the justification that the sensitivity is reduced owed the development being comparably smaller than the LCA in which it sits in. The harm cannot be dependent on the scale at which the landscape character assessment report has been undertaken, and whether the LCA boundary is larger than other surrounding LCAs. As stated in the LI’s Notes and Clarifications (TGN 2024/01), *“the focus should be on what would be affected and where, not restricted to the proportion of a landscape character area or designated area affected”* (Para 3(3)).



Figure 2: Viewpoint 12

Significant mitigation planting must be proposed along the western boundary of the site, particularly where PRow 35W runs close to the edge of the woodland (Figure 3). Whilst it is stated that planting will be proposed, the LVIA (Table D-2) states that the magnitude of change for Viewpoint 12 will not reduce from **medium** from Year 1 to 15. Additional planting should be proposed to help reduce the magnitude of effect over time. At present, views from the western edge along the PRow are valuable as they offer a sense of rurality and tranquillity away from the built edge of Crawley Down, despite being fairly close to the village. These PRows which surround the development site offer countryside recreational value with a sense of separation from the built edge. The development site facilitates this sense of rurality, by providing a sense of open countryside between the PRows and the village edge.



Figure 3: View of Field 1 from PRow 35W

The site benefits from being surrounded by characteristic woodland cover and established boundary vegetation which contributes to reducing the visual effects of the development from a number of surrounding visual receptors. This also allows significant mitigation measures in the form of planting to be proposed which would not appear out of character with the surrounding area.

We do however acknowledge that the whole development site has very few visual receptors, all of which are located on the immediate site boundaries. Visual effects are agreed to be localised and limited, however the value of these views should not be undervalued given their particular sensitive locations.

Review of the Submitted Proposal

The built development zones utilise all three fields (Field 1, 2 and 3) with some public open space within Field 2. In comparison to the adjacent outline application for development south of Huntsland (DM/25/0014 and DM/25/0015), this development encroaches further into the countryside. It is however very enclosed by natural boundaries which are well vegetated and form natural edges to the development scheme.

Policy CDNP 08 'Prevention of Coalescence' states that development will be permitted if "*it does not significantly reduce the gaps between the village and neighbouring settlements*" (CDNP), including to Crawley to the west. The proposed development extends the built edge of Crawley Down ~350m west towards Crawley town, breaking into the countryside to the west of Turners Hill Road. The proposed development site encroaches into the countryside and erodes an area which forms the separation between Crawley Down village and Crawley town. However, the development does not form a significant erosion of this gap and the separate identities of the two settlements remains.

We judge that the LVIA has underassessed the impacts on landscape character, which are judged as **moderate/minor** within the LVIA. Whilst we judge the effects on local landscape character should be considered moderate, we note that the submitted LVIA methodology identifies significant effects as major/moderate or higher. We therefore do not judge that the proposed development would "*detract significantly from the openness and character of the landscape*" (CDNP 08) in accordance with the requirements of Crawley Down Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy DP12 'Protection and Enhancement of Countryside' of the Mid Sussex District Plan is applicable to this application. We judge that the proposed development will cause adverse impacts on the intrinsic character and beauty of this area of the landscape, and the ability of surrounding receptors to enjoy this countryside landscape.

We do however note that the proposed design and layout has contributed to reducing the impacts on the character and beauty of this area of the landscape by protecting important features and setting the development away from sensitive edges, allowing for a sense of the countryside character to be partially retained along surrounding PRoWs.

All development is based on the frontages facing onto the POS and outer edges of the site, which enhances the visual amenity and security of the scheme. Appendix A of the Planning Statement also confirms that all Ancient Woodland has a 15m buffer and all hedgerows have a 5m buffer.

A shared pedestrian/cycle route that also connects to the surrounding PRoWs and accords with Policy DP22 of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

Recommendations

If minded for approval, we have the following recommendations regarding the design and layout:

- As represented by Viewpoint 3, mitigation for observations of the roofline will not reduce the magnitude of change by Year 15. Since this view is contained owed to the topography, we advise that additional mitigation measures through planting are proposed closer to the southern boundary to the PRow to reduce visual effects. Screening planting close to the southern boundary would contribute to reducing the sense of built development from this PRow, therefore retaining some sense of rurality.
- There is an opportunity to set development back from the western site boundary, notably where PRow 35W runs close to the woodland edge. The valued sense of rurality is compromised in this location and therefore providing more setback will contribute to reducing the impacts and sense of imposition from the western countryside edge.
- The 65-bed care home is likely to have a higher elevation and then surrounding dwellings. We advise this is located closer the existing urban edge than the countryside edge. This will contribute to reducing the urbanising effect of the development.
- DPA9 requires a country park to the south and along the western boundary. Whilst the southern country park has been proposed within the neighbouring outline application, POS along the western edge is severed by the care home. We advise that enhanced connections and a wider POS are proposed along the full extent of the western site boundary.
- Significant planting should be proposed long the western edge of the development site. The sense of rurality experienced from PRow 35W is valuable considering its proximity to the edge of Crawley Down, however this PRow benefits from being perceptually within the rural countryside. The proposed development will compromise this sense of rurality, therefore we advise that significant planting is proposed in accordance with the woodland character on this edge of the site.
- Owing to the SuDS features being located within the POS and form the countryside edge, we encourage the basin design to be heavily planted to ensure this 'urban' feature is well integrated into this location. The basin design should avoid having steep banks, precast concrete headwalls with metal railings, and bare banks which appear unnatural.
- Additional SuDS features would also be beneficial within the built areas of the development, in the form of swales or rain gardens which can be located alongside roads and paths.
- Any higher storey buildings should be located towards the eastern edge of the site, closer to the existing urban edge of Crawley Down.

Summary

The proposed development will cause permanent adverse impacts on the landscape character which can be partially mitigated through some additional layout amendments and mitigation measures. We recognise the Reg 19 Allocation for Site DPA9 and judge that there is some capacity to accommodate development within the site. We advise that the above recommendations are considered and embedded in any proposals coming forward to reduce the impacts on both the landscape character and the visual amenity.

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.