



Mid Sussex District Council
Oaklands Road
Haywards Heath
West Sussex
RH16 1SS

Date: 6 June 2025
Our ref: 04861

For the attention of: Planning Department planninginfo@midsussex.gov.uk

Application ref: DM/25/1129
Location: Land At Foxhole Farm, Foxhole Lane, Bolney, West Sussex
Proposal/Description: Outline application (appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved), for the erection of up to 200 residential dwellings, including affordable housing; a community building (use class F1) encompassing land for education provision, together with associated access, ancillary parking and landscaping; the creation of a vehicular access point from the A272 Cowfold Road, and pedestrian and cycle only access to The Street; and creation of a network of roads, footways, and cycleways through the site; together with the provision of countryside open space, children's play areas, community orchard, and allotments; sustainable drainage systems and landscape buffers.

Thank you for consulting with Place Services on the above Outline planning application. This letter sets out our consultation response on the landscape impact of the application and how the proposal relates and responds to the landscape setting and context of the site. This letter sets out our landscape comments and observations based on the submitted amended documents and plans, whilst also looking to provide recommendations for how to proceed.

Summary

Not supportive on landscape grounds	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Supportive subject to attached recommendations and / or conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Further information required prior to determination	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No landscape comments / does not wish to comment	<input type="checkbox"/>

This review is based on a desktop study without a site visit of the above-referenced application and its submitted documents. Our Landscape comments are as follows:

Site Context:

The site is located to the west of Bolney village and comprises a number of grazing fields. The land is associated with and accessed via Foxhole Farm which is located along the western boundary in the centre of the land parcel.

The eastern boundary is largely defined by rear gardens of The Street. All other boundaries are vegetated with hedgerow and hedgerow trees. Cowfold Road is located beyond the southern boundary and Foxhole Lane to the west. Public Right of Way (PRoW) footpath 44Bo is located along the northern boundary and extends east to the wider PRoW network.

Topographically, the site peaks around the farmstead of Foxhole Farm and falls to the south and northwest corner. Bolney Conservation area is split into two parts located to the east of the site and abutting the northeastern corner of the site where a cluster of listed buildings are located. Further listed buildings are located to the southeast and west across Foxhole Lane.

Planning Policy Context:Mid Sussex District Plan (MSDP) (Adopted March 2018)

Policies of considered relevance include [inter alia]:

- Policy DP12 Protection and Enhancement of Countryside
- Policy DP15 New Homes in the Countryside
- Policy DP22 Rights of Way and other Recreational Routes
- Policy DP26 Character and Design
- Policy DP37 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- Policy DP38 Biodiversity

The Emerging Mid Sussex District Plan is currently undergoing Regulation 19 examination. The following policies are considered relevant [inter alia]:

- Policy DPN3 Green and Blue Infrastructure
- Policy DPN4 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- Policy DPB1 Character and Design
- Policy DPA14 Land at Foxhole Farm, Bolney
- Policy DPC1 Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside
- Policy DPC2 Preventing Coalescence
- Policy DPC3: New Homes in the Countryside

Bolney Neighbourhood Plan 2015 – 2031 (September 2016)

The Bolney Neighbourhood Plan was made in 2016 and the following policies are considered:

- Policy BOLBB1 Built-up Area Boundary

- Policy BOLE1 Protect and Enhance Biodiversity
- Policy BOLE2 Protect and Enhance the Countryside
- Policy BOLD1 Design of New Development and Conservation

Review of the proposal/submitted information:

Landscape Visual Appraisal (LVA)

The application has been accompanied by the submission of a Landscape Visual Appraisal (LVA) undertaken by SLR Consulting Limited (SLR) on behalf of Wates Developments Limited (Wates). Overall, the LVA has been conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’ Third Edition (GLVIA3), published by the Landscape Institute (LI) and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA).

We note para 1.2.2 of the LVA which states that *“The appraisal is based upon a desk top assessment of relevant plans, guidance and character assessments, as well as several site assessments carried out in both the winter and summer months between January 2020 and January 2025.”*

Landscape Character

Section 4 of the LVA correctly identifies the baseline Landscape Character Areas (and neighbouring LCAs where relevant) in which the site is located, these include:

- NCA 122: The High Weald (National Character Area (NCA))
- LCA HW4: High Weald Fringes and LCA 4: Hickstead Low Weald (West Sussex LCA, 2005)
- LCA 10: High Weald Fringes (Mid-Sussex LCA, 2005)

Section 4.2.5 identifies the site as Landscape Capacity Area 60: Bolney Sloping High Weald of the Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Assessment (2007) and the updated Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development (2014). Within these, the site was assessed to have Low landscape capacity in 2007 and amended to Low/Medium in the updated 2014 assessment; however, it should be noted that the site remains Moderately sensitive with Substantial value in both assessments and the difference in capacity is owed to a differing methodology approach.

The LVA goes on to assess the local character of the site (para 4.3.6.1) and concludes that “The site exhibits many of the characteristics of landscape character areas HW4 and LCA 10, High Weald Fringes,” and comprises the following characteristics:

- Agricultural, and generally rural
- Enclosed by hedgerows and woodland
- Long views to the South Downs, across the Low Weald, from the raised landform east of Foxhole Farm

Section 2.2 of the LVA identifies the site as being in close proximity to the High Weald National Landscape (formerly AONB) and section 2.4 goes on to assess the sites’ contribution towards the setting of it.

The LVA has assessed the impact on the following landscape receptors:

- Individual Elements and Features
- Aesthetic and Perceptual Aspects
- Overall Character

Overall character includes 'Local Area of High Weald Fringes' and has been assessed as medium/low sensitivity and Medium/Slight magnitude of change resulting in moderate/minor negative effects. Given the above acknowledgement of the sites' contribution towards HW4 and LCA 10 we would expect the size/scale of change to be greater than 'small' where methodology (Table A5) states *"Small level of landscape change: There would be a small level of change in landscape character, and especially to the key characteristics if, for example: there would be no introduction of new elements into the landscape and the proposed development would not significantly change the composition/balance of the landscape."*

It should be noted that Policy BOLE2 states that: *"Outside the Built-up Area Boundary, development must demonstrate that it does not have an unacceptable impact on the landscape."*

Visual Impact

We welcome the Type 1 (Annotated) and Type 3-4 (Photomontages) to represent the development within its context, which generally aligns with the LI's Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 06/19: 'Visual Representation of Development Proposals'.

While we appreciate photography was taken in October, which is considered autumn, much of the vegetation remains in full leaf. We would have welcomed the provision of winter representative views; however, we recognise the inclusion of winter assessments within the notes.

Of the 14 viewpoints assessed, five Type 3-4 photomontages have been produced. While we welcome the inclusion of these, they all remain in close proximity to the sites boundaries and we would welcome further assessment of the wider views, particularly from the elevated land to the north. Furthermore, assessment of views from PRow footpath 4Bo within the setting of Grade II* listed Wykehurst Park and Jeremys Lane (High Weald Landscape Trail) to confirm the lack of intervisibility between the park, the site and the wider landscape would have been welcomed.

Table E-2 of the LVA sets out the Analysis of Magnitude of Visual Change at Representative Viewpoints where viewpoint 4 (from PRow Bo44) has been assessed to have 'small' scale of change and 'slight' magnitude of change in year 15. However, given the current open countryside views where Table E-1 notes *"Walkers are likely to be focused on views of the countryside."* and concludes the viewpoint to have an overall high/medium sensitivity; we would consider the enclosure of the view by the introduction of vegetation close up to the PRow to be greater than small. Emerging policy DPA14 requires the development of the site to *"Retain the character of footpath 44Bo which runs along the site's northern boundary and create a pedestrian link from the site."*

Policy DPA14 also requires the development of the site to be *"Informed by a Heritage Impact Assessment, provide an appropriate layout and design which protects the setting of nearby Grade II listed building, 'Walnut and Well Cottage', and Bolney Conservation Areas (North and South)"*. The Site Assessment Pro-forma for the Local Plan relating to the site,

Land at Foxhole Farm, Bolney (ref.1120), requested verified views to confirm the impacts on the PRow and the Conservation Area to the north. Para. 8.4 - 8.5. of the Heritage Statement states that mitigation has reduced the heritage impact and that *“This has been tested through verified views, which are provided in the above assessment.”* However, no such views are provided either within the Heritage Statement or the LVA from the Conservation Area (north).

Notwithstanding this, we remain concerned regarding the impact on the visual amenity of the Public Right of Way given the proximity of built development to the boundary and the function of the PRow as the approach and departure of the conservation area where the existing landscape features and open countryside views provide the transitional landscape.

Parameter Plans

The parameter plans are broadly followed by the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (Dwg. FHF – 44 Rev 04). However, the proximity of the built development envelope to the northern boundary is questioned. While the landscape buffer is ordinarily welcomed, the visualisations provided in the LVA suggest a marked change in the perceptual qualities currently provided along the PRow by open countryside views to enclosed vegetated views. Setting back the development envelope further from the northern boundary to allow for a more open character will better support Policy DPA14 which requires the development of the site to *“Retain the character of footpath 44Bo”*.

As noted within the LVA, Foxhole Lane is relatively rural in character (5.5.1.7). We highlight the ‘Landscape Guidelines for protecting the character of rural roads and lanes’ of the West Sussex County Council Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape which states that *“Guidelines for protecting the character of rural roads and lanes include [inter alia]: respect the historic character of rural roads and lanes, notably those with sunken profiles or verges and, where possible, use designs and materials that are locally distinctive, and road surface-dressings which complement local building materials.”*, of particular concern is the development parcel to the south along Foxhole Lane where the built envelope encroaches into the setting of the lane and potentially altering the rural character of it.

Furthermore, para 4.16 of the strategy states: *“Guidelines for improving the rural urban fringe include:*

- *give priority to landscape enhancement on the fringes of urban areas where the landscape is degraded and where there are pressures for development, recreation and other new land uses.*
- *encourage the planting of new woodlands and hedgerows where appropriate to reinforce existing or former landscape character and create and enhance wildlife habitats.”*

Reducing the development envelope from the southwestern corner will better satisfy Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside which requires the protection of countryside character and states that *“Development will be permitted in the countryside, defined as the area outside of built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District”*

The Build Heights Parameter Plan (dwg. P20074-RFT-XX-XX-DR-A-0114 Rev P02) proposes up to 2.5 storeys on the southern boundary. While the heights could be considered somewhat in keeping with properties on the southern side of London Road, we have concerns regarding the density and massing in combination and query the appropriateness of isolated increased heights. Policy BOLD1 states that the following criteria should be met for new development *“It is designed to a high quality which reflects Bolney’s rural nature and responds to the heritage and distinctive character by way of; height, scale, spacing, layout, orientation, design and materials of buildings”*

Illustrative Masterplan

- The Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (Dwg. FHF-44 Rev. 04) identifies hedgerow boundaries to majority of private gardens. The retention of these cannot be secured post occupancy unless they are included within the Landscape Management Plan. This concern is also extended to trees proposed within private gardens. We expect greater landscape provisions to be provided within the public realm.
- In addition to the above concern, we also highlight the importance of following Secure by Design principles regarding rear garden boundary treatments where robust defensive barriers such as brick walls and/or fencing with defensible planting is required. Principle DG16 of the Mid Sussex Design Guide (MSDG) states that: *“Properties should not back onto the settlement edge and the edge should not be defined by rear garden fences.”*
- The current layout limits the ability of the proposals to provide a verdant street scene across the scheme. Para 136 of the NPPF states: *“Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments.”* Principle DG27 of the MSDG SPD states that: *“From the outset, there should be a clear landscape strategy that is an integral part of the design of new development covering all streets and public spaces while accounting for the growing process”*
- The car parking courts lack landscape interventions, the National Design Guide (NDG) (para 77) states: *“A well-designed movement network defines a clear pattern of streets that [inter alia]: incorporates green infrastructure, including street trees to soften the impact of car parking, help improve air quality and contribute to biodiversity.”* Principle DG19: Provision of off-street parking of the MSDG SPD states that: *“Larger parking courts/squares will normally be unacceptable unless they are designed as part of a well landscaped and ordered open space that contributes positively to the development.”*
- The layout of the northern parcel has resulted in multiple dwellings backing on to one single dwelling creating undesirable overlooking. Principle DG45 of the MSDG SPD sets out guidance to demonstrate privacy stating that: *“Direct overlooking of private amenity space from habitable rooms in neighbouring properties should normally be avoided.”* We advise the applicant to review densities and layout.

- We anticipate the proposed access road through the central area will be a detracting feature of the Public Open Space and will have negative effects on the Green Infrastructure benefits.

Summary:

Overall, we recommend revising the parameters of the outline application to reduce the development zone from the northern boundary and reduce impacts on the visual amenity of PRow Bo44. Additionally, we advise setting back development from Foxhole Lane, particularly in the southwestern corner to allow for greater landscape enhancements supporting the rural character of Foxdale Lane.

We cannot be supportive of the proposals in their current form. The mitigation provided is not adequate to reduce the adverse effects, given the distinct undulating character and open views to the countryside from PRow 44Bo. We consider that the layout, scale and mass are not sympathetic to Bolney's rural character.

We would advise that the proposals be reviewed, taking into consideration our comments to conform with national and local policy.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries in relation to this advice.

Place Services – Landscape Team

Email: landscape@essex.gov.uk



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.