

Urban Design Observations

To: Development Management, Joanne Fisher

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

Application ref: DM/25/1129

Date: 12/06/25

Address: Land At Foxhole Farm, Foxhole Lane, Bolney, West Sussex

Description: 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.

Stage: Outline application (appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved)

This is an outline scheme in which appearance, design, landscaping and scale are reserved matters.

This is a well-thought-through scheme that had addressed most of the concerns raised at the previous consultation.

The scheme sufficiently addresses the principles set out in the Council's Design Guides and accords with policy DP26 of the District Plan; I therefore raise no objection to this planning application. To secure the quality of the design, I would nevertheless recommend some small improvements.

The layout can be commended for the following:

- It positions built development away from the highest ground (to protect views towards and from the listed church).
- It integrates the existing landscape structure.
- It sensibly locates open space pockets along the main movement lines, not only enhancing connectivity but also revealing views of large trees and other key visual features, thereby increasing legibility and reinforcing the site's character.
- It responds well to the desire lines.
- It maximises connectivity between new and existing communities by using both eastern access points from The Street.
- It adopts a perimeter block layout that potentially could include houses that will address the streets and spaces and provide secure rear gardens.
- It locates most of the play spaces to be easily accessible for all new residents, while also serving as attractive, inclusive amenities for the existing village community.

- It enhances the access point between properties of Westmeadow and Downland which leads into a sufficiently framed and sized, welcoming open space that increases the overall sense of arrival.
- It opens footpath links around north-west and north boundary, improving permeability and connection to the wider context.
- It omits front threshold parking along the primary road, which contributes to a clearer street hierarchy.
- It achieves well defined streets with a good level of enclosure and parking not dominating streets.
- It incorporates parking spaces discreetly and shows boundary treatments that should screen them from the main public realm.

Other comments:

- It is unfortunate that the vehicle access road to the northern parcel has been routed through the existing field due to the lack of alternative routes. However, this access appears to be carefully designed, with the new road positioned away from the existing back gardens and elevations along the eastern site boundary. Adequate vegetation buffer strips are included to prevent headlight glare and maintain privacy, while at the same time allowing for the existing rear elevation windows to provide some level of passive surveillance. The use of appropriately styled railings gives the access route a distinct and cohesive character.
- Northern parcel: It is unfortunate that the existing fences abutting the countryside edges were not designed out by creating a back-to-back housing layout in that location. However, I acknowledge that this approach was necessary to steer development away from areas at risk of surface water flooding. I support the orientation of the houses along with incorporating pedestrian looped links at the parcel's perimeter.

Suggested approach and improvements:

- Provide clear sustainability strategy supported by plans and other drawings.
- Provide clear Lighting Design Strategy for the whole scheme. The lighting strategy must be coordinated with the trees. Avoid conflicts which will reduce the light spread over the footpaths in particular.
- A pedestrian link should be provided along the east of the LAP, located within the southern parcel pocket park as higher level of permeability is needed in that location.
- Southern Parcel: To enhance the sense of arrival, incorporate a combination of hedges, trees, and low walls, complemented by appropriate rural fencing. As a design reference, analyse the low wall treatments along the historic section of The Street at the entrance to Bolney, which offer valuable cues in terms of scale, materiality, and character.
- The architecture is promising, though some corner units will require refinement at the Reserved Matters stage.
- All apartments would expect to have private outdoor space accessed directly for the living zone.
- Avoid blank flank walls.

I would encourage further development of this Illustrative masterplan.