

Policy Comments

DM/26/0303 – Land At Borers Arms Road, Copthorne, West Sussex

Outline planning application with all matters reserved except for access for the demolition of an existing commercial building and the erection of up to 260 dwellings, up to 1,700sqm of employment floorspace E(c)(iii), E(g)(i)(ii)(iii), car parking, landscaping, open space, and associated development works, with access from Copthorne Bank and Borers Arms Road.

Mid Sussex Development Plan

The Development Plan comprises of the adopted 2018 Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031, currently under review, and the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (Site Allocations DPD) adopted June 2022.

The review of the District Plan commenced in 2021. The Mid Sussex District Plan (2021-2039) Submission Draft was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 8th July 2024. The Examination Hearings took place in February and March 2026. At this stage, minimal weight can be given to the policies within the draft District Plan.

Principle of development

The application site is located to the northeast of Copthorne, north of Borers Arms Road and east of Copthorne Bank. Most of the application site falls within the jurisdiction of Tandridge District, however, one of the principal access roads is within Mid Sussex District, from Borers Arms Road through Borers Yard industrial estate, which is an Existing Employment Site as designated by Policy SA34: Existing Employment Sites (Site Allocations DPD).

Housing Land Supply

Paragraph 78 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local planning authorities to *“identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years’ worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old.”*

The adopted District Plan is now more than five years old. Therefore, the housing land supply is measured against Government’s standard method. The standard method is currently 1,334 dwellings per annum (dpa), compared to the 1,090dpa if the adopted Plan figure were applied. Whilst the Council has performed excellently against other Government measures of delivery (Housing Delivery Test) the Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites.

Due to most of the site, except the access, falling within Tandridge District rather than Mid Sussex District, none of the 260 homes proposed would go towards meeting the Mid Sussex District housing requirement. It would all go towards meeting the housing requirement of Tandridge District.

Employment

Borers Yard industrial estate is an Existing Employment Site as designated by Policy SA34: Existing Employment Sites (Site Allocations DPD).

The access from Borers Arms Road, through Borers Yard industrial estate, requires the demolition of a commercial building in Borers Yard. The Planning and Affordable Housing Statement submitted with the application sets out that the demolition of the commercial building is required to facilitate a new road to be formed to serve the new development from the south. There will be a loss of 244 sqm of employment floorspace in Mid Sussex, which will be replaced by up to 1,700sqm of employment space in Tandridge.

Policy SA34: Existing Employment Sites sets out that proposals on Existing Employment Sites that would involve the loss of employment land or premises will only be supported where it can be clearly demonstrated by the applicant that the site / premises are no longer needed and / or viable for employment use. The policy requires demonstration of this through the provision of details of comprehensive marketing of the site for at least 12 months and appropriate to the prevailing marketing conditions; and a financial appraisal that demonstrates that the development of any employment generating use is unviable. Whilst this application involves the loss of employment floorspace in Mid Sussex, on an Existing Employment Site, given the re-provision of a greater quantum of employment floorspace than existing, adjacent to the existing industrial area it is not necessary for the applicant to meet the requirements of Policy SA34: Existing Employment Sites. However, there is little information within the application documentation to explain if there will be a detrimental impact on the current operation of the industrial estate, that could jeopardise its future operational viability. This includes consideration of parking provision and circulation space within the industrial estate.

Transport

Policy DP21: Transport sets out that development will be required to support the objectives of the West Sussex Transport Plan and decisions on proposals must take account of a number of things including whether the scheme is sustainably located; whether opportunities to minimise the need for travel; and whether appropriate opportunities to facilitate and promote the increased use of alternative means of transport to the private car have been explored and taken up; and whether adequate car parking is provided.

The policy also requires development which generates significant amounts of movement to be supported by a Transport Assessment / Statement and Travel Plan; to provide appropriate mitigation to support new development on the local and strategic road network; and to avoid severe additional traffic congestion, individually and cumulatively, taking account of any proposed mitigation.

The application is supported by a Transport Assessment and Framework

Travel Plan, however it will be down to West Sussex County Council to assess the details of these and provide comments.

Infrastructure

Policy DP20: Securing Infrastructure sets out that the Council will expect developers to provide for, or contribute towards, the infrastructure and mitigation measures made necessary by their development proposals through appropriate on-site mitigation and infrastructure provision; and the use of planning obligations.

The location of the proposed development is adjacent to Copthorne in Mid Sussex, which is a Category 2 settlement. Category 2 settlements are characterised as larger villages acting as Local Service Centres providing key services in the rural area of Mid Sussex. These settlements serve the wider hinterland and benefit from a good range of services and facilities, including employment opportunities and access to public transport.

It is considered that due to the location of the proposed development adjacent to Copthorne, that many of the residents will likely use the services and facilities in Copthorne rather than services and facilities provided by settlements in Tandridge District, and therefore appropriate infrastructure contributions to Mid Sussex District Council should be secured.