



28/03/2025

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

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/25/0445
Location: Land At Colwell Farm Lewes Road Haywards Heath West Sussex
Proposal: Outline application with all matters reserved except for access, for up to 80 dwellings with associated landscaping, open space, infrastructure and vehicular and pedestrian accesses.

Dear Joanne,

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

Summary

We have concerns regarding the assessed effects on landscape character within the LVIA and the conflicts with the gap policy. On this basis, we would currently not be supportive of this application. We advise that additional information is included within the LVIA demonstrating effects on the relevant LCAs and should also provide an overall judgement on the level of effect to the relevant landscape receptors. Recommendations regarding the design of the scheme have also been included.

Site Context

The application site is located to the south of the A272 Haywards Heath Road on the southeast edge of Haywards Heath, sited to the rear of properties on the adjacent road. The site comprises three pastoral fields located between woodlands to the south and east, and rear gardens to the north.

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 DP13 Preventing Coalescence
- Policy DP16 High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Policy DP22 Rights of Way and other Recreational Routes
- Policy DP26 Character and Design
- Policy DP37 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- Policy DP38 Biodiversity

Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan (January 2016)

The following policies are considered relevant to this application:

- Policy E5 Local Gap
- Policy E6 Green Infrastructure
- Policy E7 SuDS
- Policy E8 Major Development
- Policy E9 Local Character
- Policy E11 Views
- Policy E13 Outdoor Space

Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study (2007/2014)

The site is located within 42 Haywards Heath South-Eastern Fringe. The Landscape Sensitivity of this area is assessed as **Substantial**, owed to its contribution to the separation between Haywards Heath and Scaynes Hill, the open and exposed southeast slopes and some intervisibility with the wider landscape. The area is also assessed as having Moderate Value, owed to the surrounding designations and perceptual quality. This is assessed overall as having Low Capacity for development.

Para 5.2.2 describes areas with Low Capacity as “*development would have a significant and detrimental effect on the character of the landscape as a whole and, or, on the setting to existing settlement or outstanding assets within the District. Development in these character areas should only be small scale and proposals would need to demonstrate no adverse impacts on the setting to settlement or wider landscape*”.

Review of Location

The Site is located within the HW4 High Weald Fringes Landscape Character Area (LCA) of the West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment. Key Characteristics of this LCA which are relevant to the site include the wooded, confined rural landscape of intimacy and complexity, long views over the Low Weald to the Downs, significant woodland cover, dense network of hedgerows and trees, pattern of small, irregular shaped assart fields.

The site comprises three fields, located adjacent to an Ancient Woodland which defines the southern site boundary. The extent of intervening hedgerows and trees and the shapes of the three fields indicates that site comprises assarted fields which are very characteristic of the LCA. Landscape and Visual Sensitivities for this LCA include *“Older, small assart pastures contribute to the intimacy of the landscape”*, and Key Issues include *“New development on the southern edges of Haywards Heath”*.

Based on the other characteristics of the LCA, we judge that the site is characteristic of the local area and contains a number of features which positively contribute to the character. It also contains features which are notably sensitive to change, including the assarted fields.

Lewes Road Conservation Area is also located along the northern boundary of the site, and the application site access point crosses through the Conservation Area. Development to the rear of this Conservation Area would reduce the function of *“the low density of development which creates a gradual transition from the countryside to the urban area”*. The proposed development site is unlikely to experience the visual effect of the countryside transition of users on the A272, however the character effects of the countryside transition to the south and into the wider countryside will be impacted by the development.

Policy DP13 Preventing Coalescence states that development must not *“result in the coalescence of settlements which harms the separate identity and amenity of settlements, and would not have an unacceptably urbanising effect on the area between settlements”*, and refers to Local Gaps in neighbourhood plans.

The site is located within the Gap Policy area of Haywards Heath Town Council Neighbourhood Plan. Policy E5 of states that *“The land outside the proposed built up area is designated as a local gap between Haywards Heath and neighbouring Town/Parishes, see figure 4, to create a landscape buffer that will support and enhance ecological connectivity, maintain the landscape character of the areas and individual settlements. New development outside the built up area will only be permitted if it:*

- *would not unduly erode the landscape character of the area or its ecology*
- *would not harm the setting of the town and*
- *would retain and enhance the separate identity of communities.”*

Review of Submitted Information

The application has been supported by the submission of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) undertaken by ACD Environmental. The methodology included within Appendix A broadly follows GLVIA3 guidelines and the associated Technical Guidance Notes, including 02/21 and 06/19.

Whilst we would have preferred the assessment photography to be undertaken in winter months, the assessment (Para 9.27) acknowledges that photography is undertaken in April with an increased leaf cover, which acts as a constraint within the visual assessment.

Landscape Character

The assessment of Landscape Character refers only to effects on the site and immediate surroundings. We do not disagree with the judged **high value**, however we have concerns with the assessed **low susceptibility** (Appendix C). The low susceptibility judgement is based on the residential expansion to Haywards Heath and the nearby presence of the A272 which produced road noise and reduces the tranquillity on site.

We judge that this justification neglects other contributing factors to a site's susceptibility to development and uses the Haywards Heath extension as precedence for developing further into the undeveloped countryside. Whilst we recognise that the extent of screening and sense of enclosure within the site will lower the susceptibility, the assessment has neglected to appreciate that this also visually and perceptually separates the site from the surrounding residential extension to Haywards Heath and provides a strong sense of place within an undeveloped area of the countryside.

We note that the Capacity Assessment makes specific reference to the areas contribution to separating Haywards Heath and Scaynes Hill, giving this landscape a substantial sensitivity rating. Also assessed as low capacity, development in this landscape is likely to have "*significant and detrimental*" effects on the landscape character. The Capacity Assessment directly refers to area 42 contributing to the separation between Haywards Heath and Scaynes Hill, therefore making this site more susceptible to development.

The LVIA also judges a **medium magnitude of change** on the site and immediate surroundings. We judge that this development would constitute a major change to the key character of this site resulting in a permanent alteration where the baseline situation will be substantially changed.

The LVIA is also not clear on its overall assessed impacts on the landscape character (Para 8.11).

Whilst we welcome that the LVIA assesses the site and immediate surroundings, this does not replace an assessment of effects on the LCAs. We also advise the following landscape receptors are included:

- LCA HW4 High Weald Fringes
- Landscape characteristics of the Capacity Area 42 Haywards Heath South-Eastern Fringe

Visual Amenity

The visual effects are based on 9no. viewpoint receptors. We would have expected an additional viewpoint receptor from the PRoW to the west of the site, located just to the south of the residential rear gardens. In winter months, views may be obtained of the residential development which would impact the sense of entering the countryside from the built-up edge of Haywards Heath. Page 69 (VP2) states that this section of the PRoW is visibly restricted, with reference to a photograph on Page 31. No photograph has been identified on Page 31 of the submitted LVIA, however this would have been beneficial for representing the views observed along the extent of the PRoW.

We would have preferred this section of the PRoW to be included within the LVIA as an individual viewpoint receptor.

Major-moderate effects are judged from Viewpoint 4 which is located at the new entrance to the development site. We agree with this judgement, and that no other viewpoint receptors included within the current LVIA will experience more than negligible effects.

Overall, the site is very enclosed and visual effects are limited. Other than from residential properties, the development is unlikely to notably impact upon other public viewpoint receptors. Our only concern, which has been highlighted within the LVIA, is the visual impacts of the access on the A272 which requires extensive tree removals.

Recommendations

We have concerns regarding the impacts of the development on the local character. Notwithstanding the above, if minded for approval, we have the following recommendations:

Design and Layout

- Height and scale of the proposed dwellings should be a strong consideration to reduce the potential visual impact of the rooflines.
- Hedgehog highway gaps should be provided within any other garden fences and barriers to link up the gardens within the scheme. We would recommend the dimensions are proposed at 100mm x 100mm.
- Play-on-the-way would be a beneficial addition to the proposals, following any pedestrian routes around the outside of the scheme.
- An integrated SuDS strategy should be seamlessly incorporated into the proposed layout.

Green Infrastructure

- A large number of trees are proposed for removal particularly to facilitate the access. Across the site, 13% of Category B trees and 24% of Category C trees are proposed for removal. We note there are proposed trees across the scheme which compensate for some of the losses, however we would prefer the scheme to be more sympathetic to tree removals.
- It would be recommended that hedgerows are planted in double staggered rows, preferably 5 plants per linear metre. There should also not be equal numbers of each species. Instead, it is recommended that it is specified in percentages, as shown below:
 - 60% Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)
 - 20% Field maple (*Acer campestre*)
 - 10% Hazel (*Corylus Avellana*)
 - 5% Trees (wild cherry, oak or hornbeam)
 - 5% made of holly, spindle, crab apple, dogwood, blackthorn and guelder rose (only a few % each IF they are present in the locality).
- Development should avoid the root protection areas (RPAs) of all trees within or surrounding the Site. Any hard landscaping proposed within the RPA of existing trees must use no-dig surface solutions. Tree protection measures for all trees must be used during construction and should be submitted in an AIA/AMS.
- Integrate the guidelines for the HW4 High Weald Fringes LCA into the design.
- We would expect details of tree pit design to be provided and where trees are proposed in close proximity to hard landscaped / surfaced areas or equipment, details of root barrier systems should also be provided.
- A predominance of one species or variety should be avoided in order to minimise the risk of widespread biotic threats to the urban forest and to increase species diversity. Preference should be

given to native trees and shrubs, but in certain urban and residential situations, better results might be achieved by the use of naturalised trees and shrubs, which are not necessarily native but are the correct tree for site conditions and would add landscape and arboricultural value.

- Amenity grass should not be proposed on all soft landscaped areas. There are opportunities to incorporate a wildflower and/or pollinating seed mix to some areas to improve visual amenity and enhance biodiversity opportunities.

SuDS

- A multifunctional approach is to be adopted to offer maximum value for space utilised. For example, incorporating natural play through these areas whilst also providing a biodiverse planting strategy. Fencing of SuDS should be avoided as it reduces the amenity benefits provided by these areas whilst increasing maintenance. Multifunctionality is completely compatible with creating safe and easily managed ponds. For example, a series of 'benches' on the approach to a pond provides a safe vantage point and opportunity to stop and consider safety. Gently sloping edge or edges allows for safe entry and exist of shallow pool and other wetlands. Health and safety risks can also be managed through education and raising awareness – interpretation boards can be provided to inform the public of the function of the pond and also to provide information on the flora and fauna the system supports.

Submission Documents

We advise any forthcoming application is supported by the following submission documents and plans:

- Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan
- Hard landscaping – The surface treatment to footpaths, public realm and highways should be aligned with the character of the development.
- SUDs strategy (including existing watercourses) – Ditches, rain gardens, swales, ditches, rills, ponds, etc.
- Planting strategy – High quality planting along access roads, boundaries and within public spaces should be proposed.
- Ecological enhancements, bird / bat boxes and habitat hibernacula proposals.

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.