

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

20 June 2024
Ref: MS/Let/P2043

Dear Mr Joseph Swift,

DM/23/2610 - Residential development of 50 dwellings with vehicular and pedestrian access, car parking, open space, play space, landscaping and all other associated works at Land South of Hanlye Lane, Longacre Crescent, Cuckfield

This letter is prepared on behalf of **Sigma Homes**, in relation to the consultation comments and representations received for the above application.

The application was submitted to Mid Sussex on 6 October 2023, and a Design Review Panel (DRP) took place on 5 December 2023. Feedback from the DRP was positive, welcoming the non-pastiche architecture, which draws on the richness of Cuckfield's vernacular, outlining that the proposal will have a 'sense of place.'

As the DRP followed the planning submission, we have sought to address the key points raised by the panel along with comments from Mid Sussex consultees and the Cuckfield Parish Council. The Proposed Site Plan has been amended to address these comments, and is supporting by the following documentation:

- **Updated Site Plan, Plans Pack and DAS Addendum prepared by ECE Architecture**
- **Updated Transport Statement (including Highways Response Note and Road Safety Audit Decision Log), Travel Plan and Technical Note prepared by Paul Basham Associates**
- **Updated Landscape Masterplan, Maintenance Plan and Specification prepared by LVIA**
- **Habitat Enhancement Plan prepared by Urban Edge**
- **Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy prepared by Odyssey**
- **Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Preliminary Method Statement prepared by MDJ Arboricultural Consultancy Ltd**

Managing Director
Chris Barker MATP MRTPI
Directors
Huw James MRTPI
Adam King RIBA
Adam Staniforth FCCA

ECE Planning Limited
Registered in England
No 7644833
VAT No 122 2391 54
Registered Office:
Amelia House
Crescent Road, Worthing
BN11 1QR

Please note, for completeness the following reports have also been updated to reflect the amended scheme:

- **Updated Air Quality Assessment – C80 Solutions**
- **Preliminary Ecological Appraisal – Urban Edge**
- **Protected Species Report – Urban Edge**
- **Noise Impact Assessment – Acoustic SE**

- **Energy Statement – C80 Solutions**

A key amendment to the proposed scheme is the introduction of Extended Buffer Zones to trees T16, T17, T19 and T20, following comments received from the MSDC Tree Officer. In removal all built-form development from these buffer zones, the quantum of development on site has been reduced from 55 dwellinghouses to 50 dwellinghouses.

Additional amendments to the layout include:

- Improvements to the landscaping strategy and enhanced planting following comments from the Urban Designer, DRP and Landscape Consultant.
- Improvements to the road layout, pedestrian-friendly access and cycle stores following comments from West Sussex County Council Highways Officer.
- Updates to the Tenure Plan following comments from the Housing Officer.
- Updated Sustainability details following comments from the Urban Designer and Design Review Panel.
- Additional play space, resting space and LAPs that can be naturally surveyed added following comments from the Design Review Panel, Urban Designer, Landscape Consultant and Community Facilities Officer.
- Gable detailing redesigned on several units following Design Review Panel.
- Solar shading added to plots on several units following Design Review Panel.
- First homes have been redesigned from M4(3) unit to M4(2), and the internal dwelling size of M4(3) Units has increased following Housing Officer Comments
- Boundary treatments have been updated following comments from the Urban Design Officer.

Consultation Comments

Tree Comments

The Mid Sussex Tree Officer comments were received on 12 December 2023, raising an objection to the scheme. Her comments included the following:

- The tree officer considers trees T16 - T20 (running across the centre of the site separating the northern and southern parcel) to be veteran trees, and a 15m buffer has not been provided in line with *Ancient Woodland, Ancient Trees and Veteran Trees : Advice for Making Planning Decisions* guidance.
- Concern over crown lifting due to proximity of development to RPAs.
- Concern over shading to plots 50 and 51
- Comments on landscaping to replaced with more native species

In response to these comments, MDJ Arboricultural Ltd went on site to assess the trees in question, using the RAVEN-2 Methodology (Forbes-Laird, 2023) to verify which of the trees (T16-T20) were categorised as 'Veteran'. MDJ Arboricultural confirmed, using this method, that T17 is considered veteran.

Ongoing discussions have been undertaken with the Tree Officer, who maintains their view on the status of all four trees in question. While we acknowledge this, we disagree with this assessment and consider only T17 of veteran status.

However, in response to this, all built form has been removed from the extended buffer zones and RPAs of T16, T17, T19 and T20. Furthermore, an additional 0.5m buffer has been included to further offset development from the extended buffer zones to allow for appropriate protection measures to be installed during construction.

In responding to these extended buffer zones, five residential dwellings have been removed from the proposed development, reducing the proposed quantum of development from 55 dwellings to 50 dwellings.

By removing all development from the RPAs and extended buffer zones of T17, T18, T19 and T20 we have appropriately addressed and responded to the tree officers concerns over crown lifting and shading.

Further to the above, and following the removal of the Scots Pines (G45) proposed landscaping masterplan has been updated to introduce more native species through the green spine, in line with comments received during the Design Review Panel.



Figure 1 - Trees to the South of Site

In our view, the proposed amendments to the submission appropriately address the comments from the tree officer.

Design Review Panel / Urban Designer Comments

Following the DRP on 5 December 2023, the Urban Designer's comments were received on 7 December 2023 which echoed many of the key points outlined within the DRP, including the positive design approach and creative use of materials. The Urban Designer has requested additional information, including:

- Updates to the landscape masterplan detailing lighting, resting spaces along PRowS and additional play spaces including Play-Along-the-Way.
- Improved landscaping design to allow for natural/passive surveillance of play spaces.
- Increased planting and screening to the western boundary to reduce the impact on neighbouring properties.
- An improved pedestrian link to the existing Scouts Hut to improve connectivity across the site.

In addition to this, comments raised during the Design Review Panel related to sustainability and the location and quantity of PV panels, along with concerns over the use of large windows on south-facing properties resulting in adverse impacts to future occupants relating to overheating, privacy and headlight nuisance.

In response to these comments, the proposed Site Plan and Landscape Plan have been amended with the following details introduced:

Play Space, Resting Space, and Connectivity

- Two Local Areas for Play (LAP) have been introduced to the south of the green spine and to the east of the Scout Hut, which will be passively surveyed by plots 11 to 14 along the south of the site.
- Direct pedestrian links have been introduced, connecting the Scout Hut with the LAP, and allowing connectivity to the southern parcel of open land in line with Parish Council comments to improve connection to the west of the site.
- A 'Trim Trail' with exercise equipment has been added to the Green Spine, to introduce a Play-Along-the-Way, for different age groups, along with resting spaces. These can be passively surveyed by properties that overlook the Green Spine, with planting kept to the use of tree species to allow clear stems, preventing areas for hiding and allowing natural surveillance.

Landscaping

- Following the Urban Designer's comments relating to the western boundary and the neighbouring gardens, the planted buffer has been increased to 1.5m inset from the red line boundary and enhanced planting has been introduced, including hedging and trees to protect the privacy and amenity of existing and future residents within the application site and to the west of the site.
- The northern portion of the swale within the Green Spine has been extended to enlarge useable space in green spine for additional resting space.

Elevations and House Type Design

- Following comments during the DRP relation to the use of glass at top floor levels, gable details have been redesigned on plots 1, 2, 3, 22, 23, 41, 42, 44, 47 (Unit types F, I, K) This is detailed further within the Design and Access Statement (DAS) Addendum, prepared by ECE Architecture.
- Solar shading (brise solie) have been introduced to plots 11, 14, 22, 23, 41, 42, 44, 47, 48 (Unit type I, K, P) in response to comments regarding overheating.
- In addition Plots 6, 7, 20, 21 (Unit type U) have been amended, with alterations to the property areas, materials, and windows being updated in response to detailed design comments from the DRP. This is detailed further within the DAS Addendum prepared by ECE Architecture.

Sustainability

In response to comments regarding sustainability during the DRP and from the Urban Designer, all plots will have 8 PV panels incorporated into the roof design (excluding plots 4 and 5 which have 4). The location of the PV panels is detailed within the proposed submitted elevations.

Lighting

With regards to lighting details, low level bollard lighting is likely to be proposed as it is unlikely that any of the roads within the development will be adopted by the Highways Authority. In our view, external lighting for properties can be controlled via a suitably worded condition following the granting of planning permission. As such, no additional information has been provided with regards to lighting at this stage.

In addition to the above, a Habitat Enhancement Plan and Boundary Treatment Plan have been submitted in this amended plans pack, as requested by the Urban Designer.

In our view, the updated Site Plan and Plans pack have appropriately addressed all the comments received during the DRP and from the Urban Designer, maintaining and enhancing the 'sense of place' recognised within the DRP, alongside the non-pastiche architecture which draws on the richness of Cuckfield's vernacular.

Landscape Comments

Mid Sussex Landscape Comments were received on 7 November 2023, and outlined that they were supportive of the scheme subject to recommendations. These recommendations included:

- Additional planting around the SuDS, that are tolerant to both drought and water logging conditions.
- Natural play spaces to be introduced to the green spine and open space
- Green roof species to be included in key on soft landscape plans

As detailed above, the landscape plan has been considerably enhanced with additional play space, resting space and pedestrian connectivity introduced, along with enhanced planting within the Green Spine and along the western boundary.

In addition to this, in response to the specific landscape comments above, additional planting has been introduced in and around the attenuation basins at the south of the site. *Betula Pubescens* are proposed around the basins, with a River Floodplain/Water meadow seed mix proposed within the basins. The Landscape Masterplan key has also been updated to include the green roof species.

The Landscape Plan has appropriately responded to the comments provided by the Landscape Consultant, and sought to enhance this landscape-led scheme with significant planting across the site. The Green Spine has no hedgerows to allow natural surveillance to the Trim Trail, Public Rights of Way and resting spaces, and the boundaries have been enhanced to appropriately screen and mitigate against visual impact.

In our view, the amendments to the Site Plan and Landscape Plan have appropriately addressed the recommendations of the Landscape Consultant and contributed towards this landscape-led scheme.

Ecology Comments

Ecology Comments were received on 7 November 2023, with the comments outlining a holding objection until additional information is received. In response to this, a Protected Species Report, prepared by Urban Edge Ecology has been submitted in response to this objection. This report details the mitigation measures to reduce the risk of development impacting the the species identified on site.

Housing Officer Comments

Mid Sussex Housing Officer comments were received on 3 November 2023, requesting the swapping of location of several affordable units to reduce the cluster size, and adjustments to the proposed dwellings to meet space standards for affordable units in line with the Affordable Housing SPD.

In response to these comments the Proposed Tenure Plan has been updated, and the following amendments have been made:

- Plots 26, 27, 33, 34, 35, 36, 49 and 50 are now Affordable Rent, and Plots 28 - 32 are First Homes.

- Plots 38 and 37 were previously in the location of Social / Affordable Rent but are now Market Housing in order to reduce the cluster size.
- Plots 4 and 5 are now Social / Affordable Rent. This also reduces the size of the cluster of affordable housing, pepper-potted the tenure mix across the site.
- Plots 9 and 17 (Unit type L) have been amended from 3B6P and are now 4B6P. This has minorly adjusted the housing mix, which is detailed in the table below.
- In line with the Housing Officer comments, the maisonettes (Plots 4, 5, 33 and 34 - Unit types B and T) have been enlarged and Plot 5 is now an M4(3) unit.
- Plot 28 (Unit type A) is now an M4(2) unit and Plots 4-5 have been enlarged and reorientation with a large parking bay added to accommodate the M4(3) unit.

The updated proposed Housing Mix is detailed below. Please note that an updated Schedule of Accommodation has also been included within the updated Plans Pack.

Dwelling Size	Market Housing		Affordable Housing		Total	
	No of Units	%	No of Units	%	No of Units	%
1-Bedroom	3	9%	6	40%	9	18%
2-Bedroom	3	9%	6	40%	9	18%
3-Bedroom	19	54%	3	20%	22	44%
4-Bedroom	6	17%	-	-	6	12%
5-Bedroom	4	11%	-	-	4	8%
Total	35	70%	15	30%	50	100%

Table 1 - Proposed Housing Mix and Tenure

Of the above units, eleven are M4(2) and one is M(4)3, in line with Building Regulations Part M Compliance. In our view, we have appropriately addressed all the comments outlined by the Housing Officer.

Highways Comments

West Sussex County Council Highways Comments were received on 7 November, and outlined that additional information was required, including the following:

- More details on visibility with plans detailing visibility splays.
- A Road Safety Audit Decision Log to be provided.
- The western pedestrian access point being extended further into the site.
- Details on the footway on the eastern side of the access to connect to the existing footway running along the southern side of Hanlye Lane.
- Details of speed controls and the crossing points within the layout.
- Details on visibility splays and dropped kerb for path/twitten running form development across Hanlye Lane.
- Details on cycle storage
- And an updated Travel Plan to reflect any changes arising from the above

In response to the WSCC Highways Comments, Paul Basham Associates have prepared a Highways Response Note (included within the updated Transport Statement submitted with this amended pack), which details how each of these points have been responded to within the amended Site Plan and supporting document pack.

Two new drawings have been prepared to respond to the visibility concerns from WSCC and ensure visibility is achievable at 1.5m x SSD, and a Road Safety Audit Decision Log has been included. Updates to the Site Plan have included connecting the western pedestrian access further into the site, and connecting the eastern access with the existing footway running south of Hanlye Lane, and the crossing point along the northern road of

the development has been moved to allow improved accessibility to the PRoW along the Green Spine.

With regards to speed controls, the proposed layout has been designed to be a low speed environment and contains material changes/horizontal alignment deflection/shared space elements which are all 'Manual for Streets' principals to reduce vehicular speeds.

With regards to the internal footpath at the north of the site, connecting to path/twitten north of Hanlye Lane, discussions have been held with WSCC and this internal formalised path has now been removed due to safety concerns and significant loss of hedgerows to accommodate the visibility splays. As such, the pedestrian crossing point along Hanlye Lane is no longer required.

Additional plans and elevations for cycle storage have also been provided and the Travel Plan has been updated accordingly.

Further to this, Paul Basham Associates have provided a Technical Note in response to comments from the DRP with regards to internal road layouts and details the amendments that have been made to the Site Layout that address these comments.

In our view, the updated Site Layout and supporting documentation appropriately addresses the comments provided by WSCC Highways.

Parish Council Comments

The Cuckfield Parish Council response was received on 22 November 2023, and outlined that the Parish Council objects to the development for the following reasons:

- Layout and design of the proposed development is not in accordance with Policy DP26: Character and Design, of the Mid Sussex District Council District Plan and is not consistent with the detailed requirements of the Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document.
- The application does not satisfy the criteria for an acceptable application set out in policy SA23 of the Mid Sussex District Council Site Allocations Development Plan Document. As detailed within the planning statement submitted with the original application, all criteria set out within Policy SA23 have been met, and the scheme is landscape-led
- The proposed layout and design are not consistent with the policy requirements of the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan
- The design principles which inform the application do not accord with the guidance set out in the Cuckfield Village Design Statement
- The application is not accompanied by information sufficient to assess the impact of the development on protected species or on the biodiversity of the site.
- The impact of the development on highway access and safety has not been fully assessed.

While we acknowledge the comments of the Parish Council, we do not agree with their statement that the scheme is not in accordance with Policy DP26, Policy SA23 of the Mid Sussex Development Plan or the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan and Village Design Statement.

As detailed within the Planning Statement of the original submission (October 2023), the proposal has met all the criteria of Policy SA23 and the submitted DAS clearly demonstrates that the scheme is in full accordance with Policy DP26. This is further supported by the positive feedback received during the Design Review Panel in December,

in which the panel praised the non-pastiche architecture, drawing on the richness of Cuckfield's vernacular, and stating that the proposal will have a 'sense of place.'

With regards to the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan and Village Design Statement, the scheme fully accords with the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan, and the proposed development has been landscape-led to fully accord with guidance of the Village Design Statement, using well-considered landscape architecture that is not reliant on vegetation to simply screen buildings, maintaining substantial open space to ensure the distinction in character between the built-up areas and the open countryside, and maintaining key views around the site with informed, landscape-led design. In our view, the scheme appropriately accords with the settlement, landscape, buildings and highways guidance of the Village Design Guide.

We have sort to address several of the concerns raised by the Parish Council, including:

- Maintaining the hedgerows on the northern boundary of the site. To accommodate connection to the Lullings Lane bridlepath to the north, highways guidance would have resulted in significant loss of these hedgerows to accommodate the pedestrian visibility splays. As such, the formalised desire path has been removed from the site to maintain the existing hedgerow, and improved connectivity has been introduced on site, with a pedestrian pathway that connects to the existing path on Hanlye Road, and a crossing point to allow a walking route through the centre of the site, without resulting in the loss of hedgerows.
- Improved pedestrian routes across the site have been introduced, including a connection to the existing Scouts Hut to the southwest of the site following Parish Council concerns and Urban Designer comments.
- Low level bollard lighting is proposed across the site, to reflect the neighbouring development at Horsefield Green and to prevent light pollution in the area. The detailed design for lighting will be secured via suitably worded condition.
- Additional play space has been incorporated into the northern parcel of land to allow for natural surveillance and supervision from neighbouring properties.
- With regards over the Parish Councils concerns over the SUDS and Drainage, the final design of surface water drainage features will be subject to detailed approval at condition stage.
- With regards to the Parish Council's concerns in relation to ecology and biodiversity, a Protected Species Report has been submitted with this amended plans pack which details the mitigation measures introduced to protect species on site.
- With regards to the Parish Council's concerns in relation to affordable housing, the Tenure Plan has been updated to reduce clustering and create a more balanced layout.
- With regards to the Parish Council's concerns in relation to highway access and safety, additional information has been submitted to address these concerns.

Summary/Conclusion

In summary, the updated Site Plan and supporting Plans Pack and documentation submitted alongside this letter have appropriately addressed and resolved all the comments received by Mid Sussex and WSCC consultees, the Design Review Panel and the Parish Council.

The proposed development represents a high quality, landscape led, sustainable extension to Cuckfield which provides enhanced and accessible open space; respects the character of the village and conserves and enhances the setting of the High Weald AONB.

ECE Planning

The proposals are fully in accordance with the provisions of Policy SA23 of the Development Plan Allocation.

We ask that all required statutory consultees are reconsulted.

If you have any further queries or require further information, please contact me on 01903 248777.

Yours sincerely
ECE Planning

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CB', written over a faint circular stamp.

Chris Barker MATP MRTPI
Managing Director