



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

Date: 14 April 2025
Our ref: 02143

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

Application ref: DM/25/0827

Location: Land East Of Lunce's Hill Fox Hill Haywards Heath West Sussex

Proposal/Description: Outline planning application for the erection of up to 130 dwellings, together with the change of use of an existing barn for a flexible community and/or commercial use, along with associated outdoor space and landscaping, drainage infrastructure, hard and soft landscaping, parking, access and associated works (all matters reserved except for access).

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

This review is based on a desktop study with a site visit of the above-referenced application and its submitted documents, and a site visit carried out on the 10/04/2025. Our Landscape comments are as follows.

Overall, we have some difference in judgements regarding the assessed impacts within the submitted LVIA, however these are not deemed substantial. We have included a number of recommendations which we advise are considered with any forthcoming submissions.

Site Context:

The application site is located to the south of Haywards Heath and comprises several grassland assarted fields surrounding Pellingford Brook. The B2112 runs along the western site boundary and provides the access into the site. To the north and northwest, the site boundary is set back from Hurstwood Lane and Colwell Lane, where residential properties, rear gardens and small fields are located. Large areas of Ancient Woodland are located to the east, and open arable countryside is located to the south.

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 DP13 Preventing Coalescence
- Policy DP37 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- Policy DP38 Biodiversity

Wivelsfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan (September 2016)

The following policies are considered relevant to this application:

- Policy 5 – Design
- Policy 6 – Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity

Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan (September 2016)

The following policies are considered relevant to this application:

- Policy E6 – Green Infrastructure
- Policy E9 – Design
- Policy E11 – Views

Policy E5 – Local Gap states “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.”

Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study (2007/2014)

The site is located within 53 Fox Hill area. The Landscape Sensitivity of this area is assessed as slight. The area is also assessed as having Slight value, owed to the

surrounding designations, exposure to the scarp and perceptual quality. This is assessed overall as having High Capacity for development.

Table 3.4 states “Landscapes with a high capacity to accommodate development are the least constrained and are likely to be able to accommodate significant allocations of development (proposals should still take care to minimise adverse impact on the wider landscape).”

Review of the proposal/submitted information:

The application has been supported by the submission of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) undertaken by EDP Ltd. The methodology included broadly follows GLVIA3 guidelines and TGN 06/19.

Landscape Character

The site is located within:

- LCA 14 – Western Low Weald of the East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment
- LCA 10 – High Weald Fringes of the Mid Sussex Landscape Character Assessment
- LCA C3 – Ditchling Common Western Low Weald of the Lewes Landscape Character Assessment

Key characteristics across these LCAs include significant woodland cover, a pattern of small assarted fields, a largely pastoral landscape, scattered trees give sense of being well wooded, a historic field structure and the audible perception of the B2112.

Key characteristics of the local LCA3 include the undulating landform, Pellingford Brook, medium-scale field enclosures, many formed from woodland clearance, predominantly assarted fields and amalgamate enclosed fields, ancient woodland and high levels of enclosure.

Overall, we generally agree with the assessment of landscape effects judged within the LVIA. We would however judge that the magnitude of change for the site would exceed moderate at Year 1, owed to the eradication of the perceived sense of small assarted pastoral fields and the rural sense of enclosure provided by the tree cover. Whilst the proposed design of the scheme largely retains the field boundaries, the experience of the collective character of elements of this site will be largely lost and therefore we judge that moderate magnitude of change is too low.

Para 6.20 outlines the overall effects at Year 1 and Year 15. We would judge this to

have marginally underassessed the residual impacts however where our judgements may differ, these are not deemed substantial.

Visual Amenity

Para 4.24 considers Viewpoints 1-3 as minor road users and therefore attributes them medium sensitivity. We recognise that this is a byway which could therefore be considered similarly to other roads, however we note that this is used as a public footpath and would consider this route to be more sensitive than has been assessed. This is noted as we consider that the view from the north on Colwell Lane is one of the most sensitive, owed to the countryside transition views it provides.

Our primary concern regards views from Colwell Lane, as views from here are of undulating countryside with tree lined grassland fields, where views of the countryside will now be interrupted by the development. Despite our concerns, we would not judge that the overall effects would exceed moderate adverse.

Other Matters

The site is identified in the Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan as being within the E5 Local Gap policy area. The site forms part of the gap between Haywards Heath and Wivelsfield to the south. The site also forms the landscape buffer that supports and enhances the ecological connectivity and maintains the landscape character surrounding Haywards Heath.

We judge that the proposed development would partially erode the separation between the two settlements. The proposed development does not extend south of the development line of Cape Road on the western side of the B2112 Lunce's Hill. We also note the approved Outline permission for 375 homes under DM/22/2272 to the north of the site. The proposed development site is therefore not completely surrounded by open countryside where it would have been perceived as protruding into the countryside with limited physical connection to other development edges.

The northern sloping landform does contribute to retaining the separate identities and perceived visual separation between the development and Wivelsfield. We do however have some concern regarding the impact of the development on the setting of the town and the landscape character.

Overall, our concerns with the LVIA are the effects on the landscape character within the site itself, and the effects perceived from Viewpoint 1 and 2 owed to the pedestrian use of Colwell Lane which is judged as a minor road within the LVIA. However, our concerns would not substantially alter the overall concluding judgements, and we do not disagree with the findings.

Submission documents:

We advise the following documents are submitted:

- 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.

Summary:

Overall, we have some difference in judgements regarding the assessed impacts within the submitted LVIA, however these are not deemed substantial. We have included a number of recommendations which we advise are considered with any forthcoming submissions.

Recommendations:

We advise the following recommendations are considered:

- Most of the public open space (POS) is given over the SuDS. We advise that the SuDS areas are designed to be multi-functional to allow public access. We therefore advise that the banks of the basin are proposed as 1:6 in places to allow public access, with 1:4 the predominant basin gradients. We also advise that the basins are planted with a variety of shrub and tree planting to add biodiversity and interest and reduce the appearance of manmade earthworks.
- The boundary treatment for the farmstead style dwelling space is important, considering that there are a large number of exposed rear gardens. These should be proposed as brick walls. We also question the purpose of the narrow greenspace which runs around the perimeter of the farmstead, and if this is publicly accessible. We have concerns regarding the passive surveillance of this space and whether the rear gardens of the farmstead could be extended on the western and northern sides to limit public access into the hidden areas.
- The earthworks associated with the SuDS basins extend into the 15m Ancient Woodland buffer on the eastern site boundary (W16). We advise that no earthworks or construction works are located within the 15m buffer.
- Additional trees should be proposed within the shared space, in the interest of visual amenity, biodiversity and shading.

- We advise the LEAP is located in a more community facing location.
- We advise that the existing wall located adjacent to the restored barn and next to the B2112 Lunce's Hill is retained and integrated into the proposed design. The access route does not require the removal of the wall and therefore we advise this is restored and retained as a notable feature along Lunce's Hill.
- The rural character from Lunce's Hill is particularly important within this site. It is therefore important the submitted DAS and the design demonstrates how the design proposals reflect the rural character from the entrance to the scheme with tree planting to soften this frontage.
- 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.
- 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.

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.