

Urban Design Observations

To: Development Management, Steve King

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

1. Application ref: DM/25/0014 and DM/25/0015

Address: (Southern parcel) Land West Of Turners Hill Road,
Turners Hill Road, Crawley Down, West Sussex

Description: Outline planning application (appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved) for the erection of up to 200 dwellings, and associated infrastructure including new access points off of Turners Hill Road with associated spine roads and car and cycle parking; the provision of open space and associated play facilities; utilities infrastructure, surface water drainage features, and associated features, on land west of Turners Hill Road and south of Huntsland, Crawley Down, West Sussex

Stage: Outline Planning Application

2. Application ref: DM/25/0016 and DM/25/0017

Address: (Northern parcel) Land West Of Turners Hill Road,
Turners Hill Road, Crawley Down, West Sussex

Description: Outline planning application (appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved) for the erection of up to 150 dwellings, a 65 bed care home, and community facility, and associated infrastructure including new access points off of Wychwood with associated spine road and car and cycle parking, together with provision of open space, play facilities, utilities infrastructure, surface water drainage features, and associated works.

Stage: Outline Planning Application

Date: 27/02/25

Duplicate applications have been submitted for both the northern and southern parcels. The sites are not currently allocated for development through the adopted development plan. Both sites form a single proposed allocation: Site Policy DPA9 of the Submission Draft Mid Sussex District Plan 2021–2039.

This is an outline scheme in which appearance, design, landscaping and scale are reserved matters. Being an outline proposal, the scheme is short on information. This makes it difficult to assess its design merits in detail. These observations are therefore initial comments. Site-wide comments apply to both planning applications where relevant.

Layout:

The overall approach to the layout is supported in respect of the following:

- The development is directed away from areas of flood risk.
- The layout provides a woodland buffer to existing vegetation along the southern boundary and set development back from the Worth Way to mitigate potential visual impact to the route and help enhance its setting.
- Integrates development with the site to the north (DPA10) by introducing a combined north-south pedestrian and cycle path. This serves as a central main spine with a potential to connecting the southernmost access point and any future northern access point to Turners Hill Road and Crawley Down.
- Avoids development in the most sensitive areas, including the central ridge.
- Provides mostly suitable pedestrian and cycle connections to Crawley Down, including via the Worth Way.
- It provides a good network of pedestrian connections overall while also largely addressing key desire lines.
- Integrates and enhances the existing PRoWs within the site.
- The buildings are generally organised as a series of perimeter blocks with the frontages facing on to the streets, spaces and boundaries. This strategy ensures the attractive tree-lined / heavy-hedged boundaries are fully revealed as a backdrop to the public realm, while avoiding existing trees overshadowing rear gardens.
- The development locates landmark buildings at the junctions and in other strategic places, so they terminate and enclose views. Employs “L” shape configuration.
- Development is generally laid out with a street hierarchy that allows users to easily distinguish main streets and main routes from secondary and minor routes.
- Additionally, it strategically locates play and gathering spaces along key routes and at the edges of new and existing developments. This approach improves legibility and enhances the integration and interaction between existing and new communities.
- Northern parcel omits front thresholds and employ side parking, with garages and rear court parking.

The updated layout has shown improvement based on the pre-application discussion. However, some of the previously raised issues could still be further improved and some remain unresolved.

Suggested Access improvements:

Three points of access onto Turners Hill Road are proposed. The application site will be served by access provided from Wychwood Place.

- Southern Parcel: Access to Public Transport Services:
The need to address the desire lines at the southeast tip of the site was discussed during the pre-application stage. I believe that not incorporating a clip-on walking and cycling path along the western edge of the bridge, which would provide the safest and most direct connection from the site exit to the existing bus stop located to the southwest of the bridge, is a missed opportunity.

- Southern Parcel: Prioritising pedestrians and cyclists mean creating routes that are safe, direct, convenient and accessible for people of all abilities. I'm not convinced that the proposed solution for reaching the bus stop will be effective, as it's overly complicated and does not address the issue of the very narrow bridge pavements.
My concern is that as the area becomes busier with increased activity, the unsafe but more direct route along the western edge of the bridge will likely see more frequent use.
- Southern Parcel: Ensuring continuity for cyclists' route across the B2028 and then into Crawley Down village to a reasonable point should form part of the design. This is crucial for safety and convenience.
- Footways along the B2028 could be improved.

Other suggested improvements:

- Massing/Layout: In response to the 'Building Heights Perimeter Plan' drawing; the proposal should create a sense of enclosure appropriate for the street's role in the layout hierarchy.
The distance between facing building frontages across the width of the street, together with the height of the buildings and the gaps in the frontage determines the level of enclosure that is experienced within the street.
- Primary road: Increased building to building distance may be necessary to accommodate carriageway and pedestrian/cycle provision. Creating a sense of enclosure on any primary street through a development, may require an increase in building height to balance the increased street width or to simply create a sense of place and reinforce the legibility of the development.
- Southern Parcel Layout: Scheme would benefit from expanding the play area in the north-east corner of the site, adjacent to both new and existing developments.
- Northern Parcel Layout: More could be done to create a more meaningful space. The current central green space (to the north-east of the Care Home) would benefit from being enlarged, potentially extending to occupy the entire perimeter block is located on. If flats are to be introduced, allowing them to define the central focal point would also help establish a sense of a notional centre.
- Southern Parcel Parking: Front threshold parking should be avoided on the main axis/spine. This is likely to result in environments dominated by hard surfaces and generates greater face to face building distances leading to weaker street enclosure unless combined with taller building frontages. (Principle DG19: Provision of off-street parking). Parking should normally be discreetly accommodated to the side of dwellings, and behind the building line where it is less visible from the street. Tandem parking arrangements to avoid over-wide separation gaps between buildings.
- Sothern Parcel, Legibility/Lighting: In the absence of a detailed lighting design for the development, broad assumptions on the likely lighting design and locations of luminaires have been shown on the plans. See: "Lighting Impact Assessment" APPENDIX C: PREDICTED LIGHT SPILLAGE.
The current plan shows lighting only in built-up areas, with no provisions for the cycle and pedestrian routes connecting them. To ensure the legibility of the scheme and to safeguard continuous, safe movement throughout the site, all proposed cycle and pedestrian routes should be provided with adequate lighting solutions at the reserved matters stage.
- Northern Parcel, Legibility/Lighting: Three points of access onto Turners Hill Road are proposed. The application site will be served by access provided

from Wychwood Place. Lighting improvements to the Wychwood plan main axis road should form part of the design.