



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

Date: 18 December 2025
Our ref: 12492

For the attention of: Joanne Fisher

Application ref: DM/25/3020
Location: Land To The West Of Courthouse Farm Copthorne Common Copthorne
Proposal/Description: Outline planning application for the erection of an extra-care retirement community (Use Class C2) and community pavilion, including associated parking, outdoor amenity space, landscaping and drainage, with all matters reserved except for the new access proposed from Copthorne Common Road

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.

Site Context:

The site is located to the south of Copthorne Common Road, to the south-east of Copthorne Common. The site is surrounded on most sides by hedgerows and trees, although the eastern boundary is more open to the access track to Courthouse Farm.

The topography of the site falls west towards Copthorne Brook. Copthorne Golf Course is located to the west of the site, and a woodland 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 DP26 Character and Design
- Policy DP37 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- Policy DP38 Biodiversity

Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan (2018)

Within the Neighbourhood Plan, Policy CNP11 (Character Area 3) Copthorne Common and Woodland should be considered.

Mid Sussex Capacity Assessment (2007)

The site is located within the 01 East Crawley – Copthorne Settled Woodland Matrix. This area has a substantial sensitivity rating, owed to the separation between settlements, the wooded character, the high weald plateau and the rural character aided by vegetation. It is assessed to have moderate value, particularly owed to the number of designations. Overall, the area has a low capacity for development.

Review of the submitted Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA):

The application has been accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) (Ref: 5096-LLB-XX-XX-T-L-0001) (15th October 2025) undertaken by Lloydbore Ltd.

Landscape Character

Within the Landscape Character Assessment of West Sussex (2003), the site is located within the HW1: High Weald Landscape Character Area (LCA). Key characteristics of this LCA that are relevant to the site include: wooded, confined rural landscape of intimacy and complexity, significant woodland cover, a substantial portion of it ancient, and a dense network of shaws, hedgerows and hedgerow trees, pattern of small, irregular-shaped assart fields, some larger fields and small pockets of remnant heathland.

The site is also located within LCA7: High Weald Plateau within the Landscape Character Assessment of Mid Sussex (2005).

‘The Site and Immediate Context’ would have been a useful landscape receptor, which would reflect the holistic character of the site features without fragmenting the analysis. The highest degree of magnitude of change within the LVA (landscape receptor) is judged as medium, and is associated with the individual landscape features such as vegetation. If the Site was included as a landscape receptor, we would judge that the magnitude of change would be high.

Visual Effects

The LVA identifies a number of visual receptors surrounding the site, which is reduced down to three visual receptors through a scoping exercise (Para 8.1).

View 2 from Copthorne Common Road pedestrian crossing is assessed as having low sensitivity. Para 8.15 assesses that “*existing vegetation screens much of the site from view*”. We note that the viewpoint photography was undertaken in May 2025 when vegetation was in full leaf cover, and therefore provides more screening to the development than in winter. However, this is acknowledged as a constraint within Tables 16-18 when assessing the magnitude of change for each visual receptor.

Overall, we acknowledge that the site is only visible from Copthorne Common Road which runs along the northern boundary of the site. The northern boundary is defined by a low clipped hedgerow and row of trees, which contribute to reducing the visual impact and soften the proposed new built-form behind. Additional planting is also proposed along the northern boundary which will further contribute to screening the proposals.

Review of Proposals:

The site is disconnected from the Built-Up Area Boundary (BUAB) of Copthorne and introduces development to the south of A264 Copthorne Common Road. This A road currently acts as a southern boundary for the settlement, where very limited development has spilled to the south of it. Owing to the presence of Common Land and the surrounding woodlands, the site will continue to be physically disconnected from other existing and new development. We therefore have some concerns regarding the disconnection of the site from the surrounding area, and advise that this is addressed within the Design and Access Statement.

There are residential properties located to the east of the site, however these are low in density and on large plots. Owing to the arrangement of the blocks, this has provided more public open space than the existing residential development north of the A264, which is welcomed given that the site breaks into the countryside to the south of the A254.

The site is separated from Copthorne village by the A264, which is a high traffic route with limited options for pedestrian crossing. Pedestrian connectivity needs to be a strong consideration within the development of the site.

The site also forms part of Copthorne's 'Green Ring' which is outlined in CNP11 CA3 Copthorne Common and Woodland. The site also forms part of the "*rural areas surrounding Copthorne*" which "*provide a verdant backdrop for the settlement*". (CNP, 2018). This key feature of the character area within the Neighbourhood Plan needs to be integrated into the proposals. The scheme has some larger areas of public open space and habitat areas, however a specific strategy outlining how the proposals retain elements of the green ring needs to be submitted.

As one of few visual receptors available into the site, the views from the north need to be considered within the design proposals. Street scenes from the north should be submitted with consideration for how the proposals will be viewed to the A264.

No SuDS interventions have been proposed within the scheme. The Option C Plan should include provision for SuDS interventions such as basins and swales or raingardens throughout. The rural character should be considered within the SuDS proposals, and any interventions should be naturalised where possible with planting and soft features.

Plots 100 and 101 break up the public open space (POS) to the south of the development site and should be removed. Owing to the placement of roadways and buildings, the POS is at risk of becoming piecemeal throughout the development. The design should focus on providing quality open spaces which are intentionally designed into the scheme as opposed to being secondary to the built form. The recreational open space with connections to the pond is a good example of a developing central and useable POS.

The location of Plots 88-99 has formed a narrow walkway behind the rear gardens, sandwiched between the plots and the perimeter vegetation. We have concerns regarding Secure by Design principles, since this space is not overlooked and has limited passive

surveillance. We would welcome alternative arrangements which relocate these linear development plots to ensure that the POS surrounding is of high quality and safe.

Several of the proposed POS appear car dominant, where there is extensive parking alongside. We recommend that the scheme is revised to adopt a less car dominant approach.

Submission document:

- Landscape Strategy
- SuDS Strategy
- Hard Landscape Plan
- Soft Landscape Plan
- Landscape Management Plan

Summary:

Overall, we have concerns regarding the proposed development, particularly in reference to the disconnection from the settlement boundary. Whilst we judge there is capacity for some development within the application site, the scheme would benefit from a reduction in built development to facilitate high quality open space and public realm, creation of a countryside edge, and enhancement of the 'green ring'.

Notwithstanding this, the submitted LVA is largely representative of the adverse effects associated with the proposed development, however inclusion of effects on the site itself as a landscape receptor would have been useful.

Based on the review of the current submission and the proposed design approach, we would not be supportive of this application from a landscape perspective.

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.