

Planning Policy Advice

Application Ref:	DM/25/1593
Application Type:	Full Planning Application
Address:	Woodlands Close and Land to the North of Burleigh Lane, Crawley Down
Description:	The demolition of numbers 9-11 Woodlands Close together with the demolition of other existing buildings on site and erection of 48 dwellings (Use Class C3) with open space, landscaping, car parking and associated infrastructure including provision of internal access roads and access road onto Woodlands Close.
Date:	8 th August 2025
Policy Officer:	Jennifer Hollingum
DM Officer:	Katherine Williams

Development Plan

The Development Plan comprises the adopted Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (2018) which is currently under review, and the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) (2022). The site falls within the boundary of the Crawley Down Neighbourhood Plan which was made in January 2016.

The saved policies of the Mid Sussex Local Plan (2004) and the Small Scale Housing Allocations DPD (2008) are not relevant to this development proposal.

Below are the Development Plan policies considered key to the consideration of the development proposal.

Site Allocations DPD (2022)

The site is a housing allocation within the Site Allocations DPD. Policy SA22 allocates the land for 50 dwellings. Policy SA GEN sets out the general principles for the site allocations. This includes principles for urban design; landscape; social and community; historic environment and cultural heritage; air quality, light, noise and amenity; biodiversity and green infrastructure; access and highways; flood risk and drainage; and sustainability.

The Site Allocations DPD amends the built-up area boundary of Crawley Down so that it includes this housing allocation as shown on the adopted Policies Map.

Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (2018)

- Policy DP4: Housing
- Policy DP6: Settlement Hierarchy
- Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside
- Policy DP17: Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC
- Policy DP20: Securing Infrastructure
- Policy DP21: Transport
- Policy DP22: Rights of Way and Other Recreational Routes
- Policy DP26: Character and Design

- Policy DP27: Dwelling Space Standards
- Policy DP28: Accessibility
- Policy DP29: Noise, Light and Air Pollution
- Policy DP30: Housing Mix
- Policy DP31: Affordable Housing
- Policy DP34: Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets
- Policy DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- Policy DP38: Biodiversity
- Policy DP39: Sustainable Design and Construction
- Policy DP41: Flood Risk and Drainage
- Policy DP42: Water Infrastructure and the Water Environment

Crawley Down Neighbourhood Plan (2016)

The Crawley Down Neighbourhood Plan was made in January 2016. Since then, the Mid Sussex District Plan (2018) and Site Allocations DPD (2022) have been adopted. If there is conflict between non-strategic policies in the District Plan and the Crawley Down Neighbourhood Plan, the District Plan takes precedence.

- Policy CDNP01: Securing Sustainable Local Infrastructure
- Policy CDNP05: Control of New Developments
- Policy CDNP06: Sustainable Drainage Systems
- Policy CDNP09: Protect and Enhance Biodiversity
- Policy CDNP10: Promoting Sustainable Transport
- Policy CDNP11: Ashdown Forest SAC and SPA

Yield

It is noted that the Policy SA22 allocation is for 50 dwellings and the planning application has been submitted for 48 dwellings (net 46 dwellings taking into account the demolition of two dwellings for site access). Whilst the preference would be to meet the yield identified in Policy SA22, the difference on the site itself is two dwellings and the yield in the development proposal (48 dwellings) is considered acceptable.

Site access

It is noted that the proposed site access is different to the Policy SA22 allocation. The development proposal is for the demolition of numbers 9-11 Woodlands Close to facilitate access to the site whereas Policy SA22 refers to providing access from Sycamore Lane. It is understood that access from Sycamore Lane is not possible for legal reasons. It should be noted that both of these options would result in the access within the site being in the same place in the north-west corner of the site.

Throughout the process of the Site Allocations DPD, both Sycamore Lane and Woodlands Close were put forward and remained as potential site access options, with the detailed access arrangements to be investigated further. This can be seen in the Regulation 18 document (October 2019) and Regulation 19/ Submission Draft document (July 2020).

There was some discussion regarding the site access for all the proposed site allocations during the Examination of the Site Allocations DPD. Question 3.3 of the Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) (ID-02) asked for information regarding whether the proposed housing allocations could demonstrate their sustainability and deliverability in relation to safe and secure access, which can be provided within the ownership of the allocated site, or whether the scheme relies on the acquisition of off-site land. The Council's response

(MSDC-02c (ii)) outlined that there is safe access from Sycamore Lane and that the policy wording (at that time) also allows for access to be provided from Woodlands Close acknowledging this would involve the demolition of dwellings. The site promoter was actively working with the landowners to secure a right of access from Sycamore Lane and it was understood that there were no fundamental outstanding issues with the process.

The Inspector had an Action Point following the Examination Hearings (ID-05). Action Point AP12 requested a Statement of Common Ground with the current owner of the site to reach agreement on dates of likely implementation, especially to establish whether the site is deliverable within the plan period.

A Statement of Common Ground was duly completed with the site promoter in August 2021 (MSDC-10). This confirmed that both Sycamore Lane and Woodlands Close remained as options for site access, albeit Sycamore Lane was being progressed by the site promoter as the preferred option. It was agreed that both access points would enable a safe and convenient means of access that would be able to deliver the whole of the proposed allocation.

In his report (May 2022), the Inspector provided some commentary on Policy SA22 and whether the proposed site access would provide certainty of delivery within the plan period. On the basis of the Statement of Common Ground stating that the site promoter's preferred site access was Sycamore Lane, the Inspector made a modification to the policy wording that removed reference to site access from Woodlands Close (MM21). This modification was made in relation to ensuring delivery of the site within the plan period as it was known at that time. The Inspector did not make reference to the suitability of either site access options in terms of technical feasibility and highway safety, i.e. did not remove the Woodlands Close option on any technical grounds.

As time has gone by and the site promoter has been doing further work on the site access, it is now proposed to gain access to the site through Woodlands Close rather than Sycamore Lane. As mentioned previously, this would result in the demolition of two dwellings but would still mean the access is in the north-west corner of the site and so is broadly in accordance with the objectives of Policy SA22. Based on previous work for the Site Allocations DPD, access from the south off Burleigh Lane would be resisted.

It is understood that the comments for this planning application from West Sussex County Council as the Highways Authority have raised no objection to the proposed site access being from Woodlands Close and the Highways Authority considers it is acceptable.

With the consultation response from West Sussex County Council Highways Authority in mind, the Planning Policy team also raises no objection to the proposed site access being from Woodlands Close. This alternative site access from what was finally adopted in Policy SA22 (although it remained an option throughout the plan-making process) would facilitate the development of 48 dwellings on a site where the principle of residential development has been accepted.

Pedestrian connectivity

Policy SA22 makes reference to seeking to enhance the connectivity of the site with Crawley Down village by providing pedestrian and/or cycle links to Sycamore Lane, Burleigh Way and adjacent existing networks. The proposed site layout drawing (FL24-2191-055) indicates that there will be a footpath connection to Hornbeam Place in the north-east corner of the site and two footpath connections to Burleigh Lane in the south of the site. Burleigh Lane is a public right of way with access to the wider countryside. There will also be a footpath

connection through the site access to Woodlands Close which will provide connectivity to services and facilities in Crawley Down.

Heritage

Burleigh Cottage is a Grade II listed building located to the west of the site near the south-west corner. The Planning Policy team will leave it to other consultees such as the Council's Conservation Officer to comment on heritage matters. However, the Planning Policy team would like to highlight that the stone gateways on Burleigh Lane along the southern boundary of the site should be retained as referenced in Policy SA22. It is noted that the stone gateways appear to become the footpath connectivity to Burleigh Lane and so there may be opportunities to conserve and enhance these features.

Infrastructure

The Planning Policy team would expect the standard infrastructure contributions to be made but will leave it to other consultees to provide the detail.

Other relevant matters

As the site is located on the edge of a settlement, a landscape-led and high quality design will be important. The Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD is also relevant. The Planning Policy team will leave it to other consultees such as the Council's Urban Designer to comment on design matters.

Development should be directed away from any areas of existing surface water flow paths that cross the site and any flood risk associated with the watercourse that crosses the site in line with national policy and guidance and an appropriate flood risk assessment and drainage strategy should be prepared.

In accordance with Policy DP17, financial contributions towards both SANG and SAMM mitigation are required as the site is within the 7km zone of influence for the Ashdown Forest SPA. A Habitats Regulations Assessment will need to be prepared and comments sought from Natural England.

Policy SA22 and Policy SA GEN require a net gain in biodiversity, however, mandatory biodiversity net gain will apply to the development proposal.

Conclusion

The site is a housing allocation within the Site Allocations DPD. It is considered that the development proposed in this planning application is broadly in accordance with the objectives of Policy SA22. An alternative site access is proposed but given this was previously an option and West Sussex County Council Highways Authority has raised no concerns, the Planning Policy team also raises no objections as it would facilitate the development of 48 dwellings on a site where the principle of residential development has been accepted.