



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

Date: 7 May 2025
Our ref: 03553

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

Application ref: DM/25/0590
Location: Little Reeds Farm London Road Hickstead Haywards Heath
Proposal/Description: Engineering works: 5m high earth noise bund with associated landscaping

Thank you for consulting with Place Services on the above 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 application Site is a linear shaped piece of land located adjacent to the A23. The site boundaries of the long triangular shaped fields are largely well vegetated. Within the site there are two grassland fields, a dwellinghouse and various non-commercial buildings. Employment development is located on the opposite side of the A23, which is accessed by the A2300. The wider countryside comprises grassland and arable fields. The northern edge of the site abuts Flood Zone 3.

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 DP37 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- Policy DP38 Biodiversity

Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study (2007/2014)

The Site is located within 59 Cobb's Mill Low Weald area. Whilst the Capacity study is focused on strategic development, it can be used to identify features of importance to the area. The capacity study identifies the area as being fairly rural with moderate scenic beauty, tempered by settlement and roads including the A23. It has a moderate to poor

hedgerow network with moderate boundary loss. Overall, the area has a low capacity for development.

Review of the proposal/submitted information:

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

The judgement methodology is outlined in Para 2.2 and 2.3 of the submitted LVA. We would have preferred the sensitivity for both landscape and visual to be broken down by susceptibility and value, since it cannot be assumed that a receptor would be assessed similarly for these criteria. Nonetheless, we recognise the scale of the proposed development and have reviewed the LVA accordingly.

Landscape Character

The site is located within:

- NCA 121: Low Weald of the National Character Areas
- LCA LW10: Eastern Low Weald of the West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment
- LCA 4: Hickstead Low Weald of the Mid Sussex Landscape Character Assessment

Key characteristics of the LW10: Eastern Low Weald LCA and LCA 4: Hickstead Low Weald include; gently undulating low ridges and vales, arable and pastoral rural landscape, hedgerows with hedgerow trees, crossed by north-south roads.

Appendix A judges a high sensitivity to LCA 4 Hickstead Low Weald, with ‘no change’ magnitude of change. We would not consider that 5m mounding is in-keeping with the local character and is an unnatural landform. Although the site is small in scale, we judge that the LVA has underassessed the effects on the local character owed to the extent of land which has been raised by 5m and therefore disagree that there is no change to the character.

We would also have appreciated the inclusion of the Site and Immediate Context as a separate landscape receptor, which would have highlighted that the proposals adversely impact upon the local landscape character.

Visual Amenity

Figure 4 (ZVI) of the LVA includes the Zone of Visual Influence from the proposed development site. Considering that the ZVI shows a broad area of ‘limited visibility’, we would have expected some additional viewpoint receptors which reflect some longer distance views. For example, the elevated views from Hickstead Lane to the southwest should have been included within the assessment.

Notwithstanding this, we have reviewed the included 12 viewpoint receptors and Appendix A 'Impact Schedules'. We do not disagree that the site is well screened from surrounding viewpoint receptors.

We appreciate the inclusion of Type 4 VVMs to support the application, from Viewpoints 1, 4 and 5. We note the limited visibility on the day that the photography was undertaken which inhibits clear views of the proposed development. We note from the submitted VVMs that the proposed 5m bunding extends above the hedgerow line and is therefore visible from Stairbridge Lane.

We therefore question the 'no change' visual magnitude of change, where the VVMs demonstrate the landform raising above the hedgerow line in views from Stairbridge Lane.

We therefore judge that the LVA has underassessed the effects from the east of the site, also demonstrated by the VVMs. Notwithstanding this, our own judgements will not be significantly different from that shown within the assessment, however we would have acknowledged the adverse effects arising a visibly unnatural change in landform.

Other Matters

The proposed mounding is justified within the Planning Statement by its purpose as an acoustic bund from the neighbouring A23. Whilst we recognise that a 5m mound will reduce the noise disturbance from the adjacent road, we question the scale of the proposed mounding which extends across the entirety of the adjacent paddocks and extends far beyond the existing house. We therefore judge that the extent of the site proposed for ground level changes is excessive.

The proposed tree protection barrier (TPB) is located very close to the RPA of the protected west boundary and is also located inside the RPA in some instances. To ensure that the soil importation does not impact upon the retained hedgerow and tree belt to the A23, which is integral to the visual impact of the scheme, we advise that the mounding is moved away from this west edge to reduce construction impacts on this boundary.

We also question if it is necessary for the southern arm of G16 trees to be removed to facilitate the scheme. The proposed mounding could be located adjacent to the G16 mounding, whilst still removing the southern arm of G16.

No information is provided on what imported material is to be used to form the bunding. Clarification is therefore required on the materials used to form the bunding. We also question whether the topsoil from on site will be taken and reused on top of the proposed bunding.

An OHP cable runs across the southern extent of the site. Confirmation will be needed with the power to ensure that raising the land underneath the cables is acceptable.

Following completion of the bunding construction, the land must be restored back to grassland as soon as possible to reduce the visual impact. We advise that a timescale for operational works is also submitted for review.

Summary:

Overall, we judge that the LVA has underassessed both the visual and landscape character impacts, and that the assessed 'no change' for a number of receptors is not representative of the impacts. Notwithstanding this, we recognise the well-screened nature of the application site where some mounding could be integrated with minimal impacts on the surrounding landscape. However, the current extent of mounding across the site is considered excessive, and we advise that the area of mounding is reduced. This will ensure that the landscape and visual effects are reduced, and the mounding appears more natural in shape and gradients. We also advise that our recommendations regarding planting are considered.

Recommendations:

If minded for approval, we advise the following recommendations are considered:

- We would also advise planting only on the lower banks of the mounding, to reduce the unnatural appearance of elevated tree planting.
- Tree planting should also be proposed on the eastern site boundary, to reduce the visual impact of the unnatural 5m mounding from Stairbridge Lane.
- Maintenance procedures should also be included alongside the submitted Landscape Plan. These should include management and maintenance for all proposed features on site for 5 years. Details of rabbit guards should be included, as well as their removal after 5 years or once vegetation has established.
- Large areas of the bunding, notably to the north, will provide little noise reduction when located away from the house. We therefore question whether the bunding should be located closer to the house.
- Two swales are proposed within the centre of the site, to "intercept Greenfield overland flows impounded by acoustic bund". We advise that some soft planting or grassland is proposed on the landscape plan within these swales.
- We note the presence of the Flood Zone 3 on the northern site boundary. We therefore question whether any additional drainage should be proposed on the northern edge of the bunding.

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.

