



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

Our ref: 14631
Date: 4 March 2026

For the attention of: Stuart Malcolm

Application ref: DM/26/0238
Location: LVS Hassocks London Road Sayers Common Hassocks West Sussex BN6 9HT
Proposal/Description: Hybrid application that seeks consent for separate and severable elements comprising: Demolition of all existing buildings bar the chapel, to retained for use within Use Class F and: a) Full planning permission for the development of the north western part of the Land at LVS Hassocks so as to accommodate a new SEN School with associated access from London Road, car parking, landscaping and drainage works; and b) Outline planning permission (Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale Reserved) for the development of the rest of the land at LVS Hassocks so as to accommodate up to 210 dwellinghouses (including 30% affordable housing) with associated access, car parking, landscaping, play areas, informal outdoor space and drainage works

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.

1.0. Site Context

- 1.1. The Site is located to the north of Sayers Common village and comprises a number of field parcels surrounding the LVS Hassocks Special Education School which is located within the site. The field parcels are separated by well-established trees and hedgerows. The landform of the site falls away to the south. An access road runs through the site from west to east. A Public Right of Way (PRoW) Bridleway runs through the centre of the site.

2.0. Planning Policy Context

Mid Sussex District Plan (MSDP) (Adopted March 2018)

- 2.1. Policies considered relevant include [inter alia]:

- Policy DP12 Protection and Enhancement of Countryside
- Policy DP37 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- Policy DP38 Biodiversity

2.2. The Site is identified as SHELAA Site Ref 1003 (June 2018).

Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common (Made 2015)

2.3. The following policies are considered relevant to this application:

- Policy Countryside HurstC1: Conserving and enhancing character
- Policy Housing HurstH1: Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common new housing development
- Policy Housing HurstH5: Development principles

Emerging Mid Sussex District Plan (Reg 19)

2.4. The Site is identified as emerging Allocation DPSC7: Land at LVS Hassocks, London Road, Sayers Common. Relevant landscape policy requirements include:

- *1. Demonstrate a coordinated approach and collaboration with other housing allocations in the Plan within Sayers Common to deliver high-quality placemaking which supports the 20-minute neighbourhood principles, with direct enhanced active/sustainable travel connections, and includes enabling the viability of new public transport services.*
- *2. Prioritise pedestrian and cycle access throughout the development and integrate and enhance the existing PRow which crosses the site.*
- *3. Provide any necessary upgrades to the existing access onto B2118.*
- *6. Follow a sequential approach by directing development away from areas of flood risk.*

2.5. Sayers Common Masterplan Framework Document (February 2026) also provides further information on the as DPSC7 site.

3.0. Review of the LVA:

3.1. A Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been submitted by SLR Consulting Limited dated 21st January 2026. Overall, we are largely satisfied with the submitted methodology included within the Appendices.

Landscape Character

3.2. Within the Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Assessment (2007/2014), the site is located within Landscape Character Area 62 Hickstead - Sayers Common Low Weald. The LCA is assessed as having substantial sensitivity and slight value, resulting in a low/medium capacity for development. This is owed to the settlement separation, setting of Sayers Common, hedgerows and woodlands, and rural landscape.

3.3. Table 3.4 of the 2014 assessment states: *“A Low/medium capacity rating indicates that development is likely to have an adverse effect on most of the character area and while*

smaller development may be possible in a very few locations within the character area, it will not be suitable for strategic scale development.”

- 3.4. The Site is located within LCA 4 Hickstead Low Weald of the Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex (2005). Key characteristics of this LCA which are relevant to this application include: arable and pastoral landscape, mosaic of smaller and larger fields, scattered woodlands and hedgerows/trees, north-south roads, Hickstead All England Equestrian Showground. Sensitivities also include: *“High level of perceived naturalness and a rural quality in the quieter, rural landscape to the west of the A23 Trunk Road.”*
 - 3.5. Table D4 Landscape Effects assesses The Site as experiencing **medium magnitude of change** and **moderate adverse** effects. Based on this alone, we would judge that this underassesses the effects on the site, owed particularly to the complete change in undeveloped character of the grassland fields.
 - 3.6. However, we acknowledge that the LVA also separately assesses School buildings, access track, car parking and associated open spaces and the Gently sloping fields on the settlement edge of Sayers Common, as **moderate neutral** and **major/moderate negative** respectively. This reflects the variation in magnitude of change and overall effects on different areas of the site.
 - 3.7. Overall, we largely agree with the assessed effects on landscape receptors within the submitted LVA.
- Visual Amenity
- 3.8. We welcome the inclusion of both summer (May) and winter (December) photography, as per Para 5.1.1 of the LVA. This reflects the worst-case scenario of effects.
 - 3.9. Viewpoint Locations are identified within Drawing SC5 (Rev. 00) and judgements are included in Table E2 Analysis of Magnitude of Visual Change.
 - 3.10. Views south from Bridleway 9HU (Viewpoint 1) are assessed as **substantial/medium** reduced to **medium** after 15 years. The judged reduction to medium adverse is based on the growth of the mixed hedgerows and trees alongside the bridleway.
 - 3.11. Whilst the proposed hedgerow reduces views of the proposed development, it also reduces views across the undulating grassland grazing which is a characteristic and valued feature in this area.
 - 3.12. Views from Footpath 10Hu are judged as **large/medium** magnitude of change and **medium** effect, reduced to **slight** at Year 15. The Type 4 Photomontage produced for

Viewpoint 7 demonstrates the change in view experienced from Footpath 10Hu.

- 3.13. Whilst some built features exist within the view at LVS Hassocks, including the chapel, they are set a long way back from the PRoW and form minor features in the view. The foreground of the view is currently an undeveloped countryside grassland field.
- 3.14. We therefore judge that the **medium** effects judged at Year 1 understate the visual effect on this view and also disagree with the reduction to **slight** effects at Year 15. Whilst the proposed vegetation at Year 15 is indicated to screen the proposed development from Viewpoint 7, the open views across grassland fields with the distinctive chapel in the distance will be lost to both development and the screening vegetation.
- 3.15. Overall, we judge that the assessment of visual effects has been underassessed for some of the included visual receptors.

4.0. Review of Submitted Proposals:

- 4.1. Overall, we judge there is capacity to accommodate development within the application site. We judge that significant effects may occur to some of the identified landscape and visual receptors, although most are in close proximity to the site. Where our judgements differ from those outlined within the submitted LVIA, these have been detailed above.
- 4.2. Owing to the separation from the edge of Sayers Common, the most northerly parcels are more sensitive to development. We advise that generally, the development of these parcels are more considerate to the countryside edge character and the setback from the edge, particularly when visible from the adjacent PRoW.
- 4.3. Demonstration of views towards the retained chapel should be integrated into the demonstration of the design development, as this is a key feature which contributes towards the wayfinding of the development and acts as a local landmark which can be seen beyond the site boundaries. Further details of this should be integrated into the Design and Access Statement.
- 4.4. Based on the submitted proposals, we have the following comments on the design, layout and details:

Full Application – New SEN School

- 4.5. The proposed SEN School is located adjacent to the existing SEN School, which is proposed for residential redevelopment. The application proposes a singular consolidated building with some smaller buildings within the grounds.

- 4.6. Appendix 5 - Tree Protection Plan (TPP) (Dwg no. SJA TPP 23527-041a) is referenced within the Arboricultural Implications Report (Ref: SJA air 23527-01b). Table 2 within Para 4.1.2 identifies the Category A and B trees to be removed to facilitate the development.
- 4.7. *Sambucus nigra* should be removed from the Native Shrub Mix. The species can suppress the growth of other species.
- 4.8. Where new hedgerow is proposed alongside paths, such as on the eastern edge of the SEN School site, a 3/2 wire fence should be proposed to prevent pedestrians walking through the hedgerow while it is establishing.

Outline Application - 210 dwellinghouses

- 4.9. The proposed dwellings are currently side-fronting the bridleway and partly the proposed main access road to the south. To enhance visual amenity and provide effective passive surveillance, the building frontages should be oriented towards both the main access road, and to the bridleway if possible. As illustrated in Viewpoint 1 Type 4 Photomontages, close-board fencing currently forms the rear garden boundaries along these key routes. Orientating frontages on to this high traffic route would improve the street scene, or replacing the close-board fence with another boundary treatment such as brick walls with climber plants.
- 4.10. The visual effects associated with the development, particularly from PRow Footpath 10U, could be reduced through limiting the extent of development within the most northerly parcel of the development. To reduce the impacts on the PRow and also provide an enhanced landscape buffer to the countryside edge, we advise that houses are setback from the northern boundary and a wider area of open space is provided instead. We advise that the built frontage aligns with the SEN School adjacent.
- 4.11. Appendix 5 - Tree Protection Plan (TPP) (Dwg no. SJA TPP 23527-041a) is referenced within the Arboricultural Implications Report (Ref: SJA air 23527-01b). Table 2 within Para 4.1.2 identifies the Category A and B trees to be removed to facilitate the development. We are disappointed to see a number of Category B trees from the site entrance proposed for removal, as this will have an adverse impact on views into the site from the B2118 and also reduce the sense of maturity which has formed in the avenue around the access.
- 4.12. We question if there is a more suitable location for the proposed sub-station and pumping station that does not necessitate the removal of a section of the tree boundary between the two basins. These features are located in prominent location within the centre of the POS and also require the removal of a number of Category C trees.

- 4.13. A small number of dwellings are proposed close to the western boundary, accessed via a minor road cutting across the POS. We judge that the removal of this small number of dwellings from the scheme would significantly enhance the POS provision and the continuity of pedestrian and recreational access along the western edge of the scheme. As above, this space could also be utilised for open mown grass POS for public use. This would also allow the retention of T278 and T280.



- 4.14. We do however welcome the number of smaller POS areas which are located throughout the development and break up the large extent of built development with accessible spaces.
- 4.15. As demonstrated by the Coloured Perspective View (Dwg no. 24125 / C103), we welcome the road orientation which provides long views towards the existing chapel which acts as a wayfinding feature throughout the development.
- 4.16. The existing retained chapel/community centre is located within a public open space (POS) which is welcomed. We do however seek clarification on the function of the retained chapel to understand the access requirements, and whether any car parking is required nearby to reduce pressure on surrounding residential streets. A formalised pedestrian surfaced access would also be required.
- 4.17. Connectivity throughout the scheme could also be enhanced by providing a connection from the Community Orchard through to the Bridleway which runs through the site, around the end of the rear garden dwellings and pond. This would require setting the built edge back from the west boundary slightly to provide a wider space for public access, which does not feel too enclosed. This will also provide a connection from users of the Bridleway approaching from the west, with more direct access to the chapel which is a notable

landmark feature of interest.



- 4.18. The southern parcels will require extensive cut and fill to facilitate the development, owed to the topography of the site. All material should be kept on site, if possible, integrated into the implementation of other on-site features.
- 4.19. Further to the above, retaining walls will likely be required between rear gardens in the southern parcel, owed to the topography. Cross Sections should be submitted to demonstrate the relationship between properties and the drop between rear gardens, to ensure that the garden fencing is not overbearing to lower-level gardens.
- 4.20. The SuDS basins should not be fenced off if possible. These spaces should be multi-functional or be bound by soft landscaping which can act as a safety buffer as well as providing biodiversity and visual interest.
- 4.21. Precast concrete headwalls and galvanised railings should not be proposed around the SuDS basins. Softer options should be proposed that are less urbanising.
- 4.22. We recognise that a number of the above comments above can be dealt with at the Reserved Matters stage.
- 4.23. Based on the Parameter Plans, we advise that there are some amendments to the Land Use Parameter Plan and the Green Infrastructure Parameter Plan to respond to some of the comments above regarding POS provision and setbacks.

5.0. Summary

- 5.1. Overall, we judge there is capacity for development within the site. We have some difference in professional judgement regarding some of the judgements provided within the submitted LVIA however.
- 5.2. For the Outline Application, we advise that the Land Use and Green Infrastructure Parameter Plans are amended based on the above comments, particularly referring to the setbacks and POS provision. A list of additional submission documents are also stated.
- 5.3. We also advise that the landscaping comments on the Full Application are considered.

6.0. Recommended Submission Document(s):

- 6.1. If minded for approval, we advise that the following documents are submitted for the Outline Application part of the site:
- Hard Landscape Plan
 - Soft Landscape Plan
 - SuDS Strategy
 - Landscape Strategy
 - Landscape Management Plan

Please 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.

We are unable to respond directly to applicants/agents or other interested parties. Any additional information, queries or comments on this advice that the applicant/agent or other interested parties may have, must be directed to the Planning Officer at the relevant LPA, who will seek further advice from us where appropriate.