

Urban Design Observations

To: Joseph Swift, Development Management

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

Application ref: DM/23/2610

Date: 07/12/23

Address: Land South of Hanlye Lane, Longacre Crescent, Cuckfield, West Sussex

Description:

Residential development of 55 dwellings with vehicular and pedestrian access, car parking, open space, play space, landscaping, and all other associated works.

Stage: Planning application

A piece of land located at Hanlye Lane, east of Ardingly Road in Cuckfield, has been designated for housing allocation and formal and informal open space. The development's primary goals, as outlined in SA23, are to create a sustainable extension to Cuckfield that prioritizes landscape design and provides accessible open space. The development should also pay respect to the village's character and preserve and enhance the surrounding High Weald AONB while being fully integrated with the existing settlement to ensure residents can access essential amenities.

The scheme has generally been well laid out. Houses and access road are set back far enough from Hanlye Lane to preserve the majority of the existing tree belt. This will provide a natural barrier, screening the development from the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designated countryside on the north side of the site.

The buildings in the development have been arranged so that their fronts face the new access road with a perimeter block approach that allows most of the buildings to face the attractive boundary trees. Additionally, the tree belt along the northern boundary will serve the following purposes: it will provide an appealing background for this section of the development; it will reduce the impact of traffic noise; and it will help to maintain the green character of Hanlye Lane.

The layout helps to create direct, attractive, and safe connections through the site for pedestrians and allows for good degree of integration and connectivity between new and existing communities.

The existing public right of way is retained and enhanced to provide public access to a large open space to the south of the site.

Generally, the buildings benefit from an individual design approach that will contribute to making this a distinctive scheme. The elevations are well-designed, with a creative use of materials and recess/projection techniques. Most of the elevations have good proportions which respond very well to local character and details that correspond well with local distinctive features.

Before I provide final comments on the proposal, I would ask that the applicants consider, and respond, to the following points;

- As this is a landscape led proposal, I think it's important to provide a detailed Landscape plan. Plan should include any relevant suggested improvements (as listed below) and more detail on following: lighting, resting spaces along PRow and Green Spine, signage for PRow and also Play On The Way (All Ages) with opportunities for children to play that can be integrated into Green Spine
- It is recommended that at least some of the Scots pine trees could be preserved and integrated into the design to help with wayfinding.
- Street elevation HH exposes uninterrupted views towards garden fences stepping up behind the houses. To break down that view, introduction of more trees along this side of the street would be recommended.
- Play spaces are not well overlooked. This can be improved with better landscaping.
- The west boundary buffer zone could be expanded, and screening plants could be added to reduce the impact on neighbouring properties.
- Create a clear pedestrian link to the existing Scouts Hut and enhance the immediate landscape to provide for a better interface of this community hub with the new proposed scheme.
- Use of the block paving throughout the scheme and parking is welcomed, but further steps could be made to minimise the use of tarmac to preserve the landscaped feel of the scheme (especially around Green Spine). Grey paving is a good choice for parking spaces. Please explore other colour choices for roads.
- A habitat enhancement plan would be welcomed.
- Please provide separate drawings explaining boundary treatment
- Sustainability should be prioritized early in the design process to prevent negative impacts later. Please provide more detail on the topic.
- Areas of glass on top floors of some units feel overbearing (see plot 24, 25 and similar).