



21/03/2024

Stuart Malcolm
 Planning Department
 Mid Sussex District Council
 Oaklands Road, Haywards Heath
 West Sussex,
 RH16 1SS

SPECIALIST LANDSCAPE ADVICE

Thank you for requesting advice on this pre-application advice from Place Services' landscape advice service. This service provides advice to planning officers to inform Mid Sussex District Council planning decisions with regard to potential landscape impacts from development. Any additional information, queries or comments on this advice that the applicant or other interested parties may have, must be directed to the Planning Officer who will seek further advice from us where appropriate and necessary.

Application: DM/24/0446
Location: Land Off Scamps Hill Scaynes Hill Road Lindfield West Sussex
Proposal: The erection of up to 90 dwellings with public open space, landscaping and sustainable drainage system (SuDS) and vehicular access point. All matters reserved except for means of access.

Dear Stuart,

Thank you for consulting the Landscape Advisor to Mid Sussex District Council on the above application.

With reference to the above-named application and submitted documents received by Place Services on the 27/02/2024 asking for Landscape comments, our comments are made below.

Summary

Not supportive on landscape grounds	
Supportive subject to attached recommendations and / or conditions	X
Further information required prior to determination	
No landscape comments / does not wish to comment	

We judge that insufficient information is provided within the submitted LVA, notably within the methodology. However, we generally agree with most of the judgements provided although would have preferred these were substantiated further with additional information within the methodology. Where our judgements may differ for the provided judgements regarding landscape and visual impacts, these are not deemed substantial and therefore no revised LVA is required for submission.



There is capacity for the proposed development to be incorporated into the landscape and therefore we have included a number of recommendations to improve the submitted scheme.

Site Context

The application Site is located to the north-east of Haywards Heath, situated on the edge of Scamps Hill Road. The residential development of Haywards Heath is located to the north, west and south of the Site and the wider countryside is located to the west. The Site itself comprises three grassland rectilinear fields separated by hedgerows and trees.

Scrase Stream runs along the north-western site boundary separating the Site from Enterprise Park Industrial area and the residential areas from Noaks Ark Lane. A plantation is located to the north of the Site, adjacent to Eastern Road Nature Reserve and Little Walstead Wood which is located on the eastern site boundary. Grayfriars Grade II listed building is located to the west of the Site, adjacent Scamps Hill. High Weald AONB (National Landscape) is located 1km to the north of the Site.

An Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland is located on the northern boundary, and an SSSI is located close to the north.

The Site is identified as Site 983 'Land at Walstead Grange' within the SHELAA (October 2023). It states that there is a "*reasonable prospect that site could be developed within the Plan period*" and it is relatively unconstrained.

Planning Policy

Mid Sussex District Plan (2014)

The application Site is bound to the north by woodlands and must therefore have regard for Policy DP37 'Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows'.

Due to the Sites location within the countryside, consideration for Policy DP12 'Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside', DP13 'Preventing Coalescence' and DP15 'New Homes in the Countryside' must be had.

Other relevant policies include Policy DP38: 'Biodiversity' and DP41: 'Flood Risk and Drainage'.

Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Assessment (2007)

The application Site is located within the River Ouse and Sides (no. 44) Landscape Capacity Area. This LCA has substantial landscape sensitivity and substantial value, resulting in a low landscape capacity. The area is described as having a moderate hedge network with low boundary loss and moderate contribution to Lindfield setting.

Review of submitted information

The application has been supported by the Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (February 2024) by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd. The assessment makes reference to GLVIA3 and TGN 06/19 Visual representation of Development Proposals.



The submitted Methodology (Appendix A) provides insufficient information regarding descriptions of the descriptive thresholds (Para 1.13) for the major, moderate, minor and negligible Level of Effects. We would also expect this to be supported by a matrix which shows how the sensitivity and magnitude of change is combined to produce the overall level of effects for each receptor.

Whilst information is missing from the Methodology, we agree with the principle of the approach which combines the judgments made considering landscape value and susceptibility to form an overall judgement on sensitivity, before assessing the magnitude of change to define the resulting overall landscape effects.

The assessment was undertaken in January 2024 (winter) when in reduced leaf cover which appraises the worst-case scenario.

The submitted Illustrative Masterplan has defined the red line boundary in direct accordance with the surface water flooding zone on the north-western boundary. We question this decision whereby this area of land which acts as the open space to the north-western frontage will not be designed or maintained alongside the rest of the development. There are substantial opportunities here to incorporate this area of Flood Zone into the developed area by including flood tolerant planting and walking routes which can be used during dry seasons. At present, we have concerns that this area will not be maintained in accordance with the rest of the development.

Landscape Character

The application Site is located in [HW3 Ouse Valley](#) Landscape Character Area (LCA) of the West Sussex Landscape Management Guidelines. Key characteristics of this LCA include the shallow but well-defined attractive rural valley landscape, small, tree-lined stream in the western part, broader meandering river with water meadows, woodland cover less extensive, mixed arable and pastoral medium to large fields, pockets of rich biodiversity. Landscape and visual sensitivities include *“Valley-edge settlements include Haywards Heath, Lindfield and Cuckfield, the impact on the valley reduced by their woodland setting”* and *“Settlement pattern currently sits well within the rural landscape although there is a danger of the cumulative visual impact of buildings and other structures”*.

The application Site is located in [LCA 9 Ouse Valley](#) of the A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex (2005). Key characteristics of this LCA include strongly linear valley adjoining Haywards Heath, strong defined valley edges, tree-lined streams, attractive rural valley, mixed arable and pastoral, pockets of rich biodiversity and woodland.

The Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study (2007) ‘River Ouse and Sides (LCA 44) Landscape Character Area has been identified as a receptor within this assessment. Considering the relative small scale of the receptor and the explicit judgement within the Landscape Character Assessment that there is **substantial sensitivity and value**, we would have expected the LVA to have judged higher than **medium** for sensitivity. However, we recognise the justification that this site has limited high value characteristics described within the LCA and therefore are satisfied with this judgement.

Overall, we are satisfied with the assessment of landscape impacts, and where our judgements may differ these are not deemed substantial.



Visual Effects

17 viewpoint receptors have been identified within the submitted Figure 6: Visual Appraisal. Generally, we agree with the selection of viewpoints included and consider this representative of the potential views of the Site in the local area. We would however have preferred Appendix C: Visual Effects Table (VET) to have been broken down by viewpoint receptors as opposed to being grouped by receptor type to avoid a range of judgements, i.e. the Nature of View for Receptor A assessed as **full/partial/glimpse/none**.

Generally, we agree with the judged overall effects for the residential receptors located within Lindfield to the west. Receptors within Lindfield are judged to experience up to **moderate** adverse harm when in close proximity of the Site which is judged lower as receptors increase distance from the application Site.

More sensitive receptors include the Sussex Diamond Way (VP 15/16) and the Sussex Ouse Way (VP7/12), however the LVA evidences the limited views of the application Site and surroundings owed to the extent of intervening vegetation which is characteristic of the local LCAs.

Receptors on Scamps Hill (Receptor I) have been accurately identified as experiencing **major/moderate adverse** harm during construction and **moderate/minor adverse** harm on completion. To reduce the overall effects from Scamps Hill, we expect the submitted layout plans to consider reducing effects from the southern boundary and enhance the existing vegetated boundary which defines the southern perimeter.

Overall, whilst we would have expected a matrix table and detailed descriptive thresholds to have been provided to accurately understand how the judgements have been reached, we do not disagree with the submitted judgements.

Conclusion

Overall, we judge that the proposed development can be accommodated within the landscape in this location owed to the extent of surrounding vegetative screening and location on the edge of Lindfield settlement.

Comments are provided based on the Illustrative Masterplan (Figure 13) within the DAS which has limited information and no key. We would therefore have preferred the plan to have been submitted separately from the DAS. Our landscape comments may therefore be limited without the submission of this layout plan.

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

- The existing hedgerows and treed boundaries that divide the Site into three fields are evident on historic mapping and therefore their retention and enhancement is pertinent to the design and accordance with Policy DP37. Whilst the Illustrative Masterplan indicates the general retention of these hedgerows, we advise that minimal trees and sections of hedgerow are removed to facilitate the access points.



- Flood Zone 3 areas are located close to the eastern and western site boundaries. A SuDS basin has been proposed in the northern corner adjacent to the flood risk area and woodland boundary. We agree with this choice of location however advise that the basin has a maximum gradient of 1:4 to provide a multifunctional public space which is accessible during dry periods. The basin should also be planted with wet/dry tolerant species and trees to soften the basin and contribute to the biodiversity of the overall scheme. Precast headwalls and galvanised railings should be avoided, where a softer approach would be preferred.
- Green Lanes, Private Roads and Parking areas should all be proposed as permeable block paving to contribute to the visual amenity of the scheme.
- We have no objections to the 3m shared cycleway/footpath inside the site boundary adjacent to Scamps Hill, and also the pedestrian link in the western corner. We advise that this route is proposed with sufficient space between the hedgerowed boundary to Scamps Hill so not to impact on the root protection areas (RPA) of vegetation on this boundary. Retention of trees/hedgerows here is pertinent to ensuring the reduced visual impact of the development from Scamps Hill.
- The submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) demonstrates that there are a larger number of good quality Category A/B trees. Only 1 tree, 3 hedgerows and 1 group is required for removal to facilitate the development. With the exception of the T18(C), all other removals are related to access for paths or roads. We generally support the notion that limited hedgerow and tree removal is proposed across the development, however encourage sufficient protection for retained trees either side of the removal areas is implemented.
- An area of Ancient Woodland is located to the north of the Site. To ensure that the proposed development does not contribute to significant pedestrian activity in the Ancient Woodland, we advise that controlled access through designated routes or full access restriction is applied.
- Providing enhanced ecological corridors adjacent to the Ancient Woodland should be demonstrated to ensure there is not ecological deterioration and fragmentation of the woodland. This is particularly important to the north of the Site where the residential development is located in close proximity of the woodland, however should also be incorporated within proposals.
- Reconfiguration of the turning head adjacent to the attenuation basin within the public open space could be explored to lessen the impact.
- There are opportunities to include natural play which can be distributed adjacent to the internal hedgerow to the east or along the western boundary and into the large public open space, connecting to the play area.
- Green verges can then be used as rain gardens/bioretention areas collecting rainwater runoff.
- Additional seating and benches surrounding the SuDS basin and open spaces within the residential area is recommended.



- A predominance of one tree species or variety should be avoided in order to minimise the risk of widespread biotic threats to the urban forest and to increase species diversity. Preference should be given to native trees and shrubs, but consideration for naturalised trees and shrubs will be considered, if they are the correct tree for site conditions and would add landscape and arboricultural value.
- We would expect a range of tree stock sizes to be used across the site. As a minimum and as provided, 10-12cm should be used, however a number of trees should also be larger where the location allows to provide a sense of maturity to the scheme. Selected trees would also be preferably long-life expectancy species.
- We would expect details of tree pit design to be provided and where trees are proposed in close proximity to hard landscaped / surfaced areas or equipment, details of root barrier systems should also be provided.
- Amenity grass should not be proposed on all soft landscaped areas. There are opportunities to incorporate a wildflower and/or pollinating seed mix to some areas to improve visual amenity and enhance biodiversity opportunities.

Yours sincerely,

Megan Cowell BA (Hons) MA
Landscape Consultant

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.