

Landscape Statement of Common Ground

Prepared by Allen Pyke Associates (obo Croudace Homes (the Appellant)) and Mid Sussex District Council

17th July 2023

Introduction

- 1.1. This Landscape and Visual Supplementary Statement of Common Ground (LVSoCG) has been agreed between Allen Pyke Associates, acting on behalf of Croudace Homes Ltd (the appellant) and Mid Sussex District Council (the Council).
- 1.2. This Statement has been provided to set out all landscape and visual matters of agreement and those matters of dispute between the Council and the Appellant in this Appeal. It is supplementary to the principal Statement of Common Ground agreed between the parties and does not repeat any items that have been agreed within the principal Statement of Common Ground.

The Appeal Site

- 1.3. The Site area is 11.54ha in size. It consists of two large arable fields and a small triangular field which includes a traditional orchard. The existing character of the site is predominantly rural.
- 1.4. The Site is gently undulating and falls generally from north to south. It drops to approximately 36m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum) at a ditch along its northern boundary and a gentle valley within the south eastern quadrant. The land rises to 40.36m AOD at a gentle knoll in the south western quadrant and then drops again to its boundary with Church Lane which is formed by a steep vegetated bank along the lane frontage. The lowest point on the site is approximately 31m AOD where the internal valley meets Church Lane.
- 1.5. The key landscape features are the orchard and the mature hedgerows and trees which form the field boundaries. These are readily visible in the landscape and

reinforce the field patterns and any sense of containment. They also provide some filtering of views from the adjoining land uses.

The Appeal Site Context

- 1.6. The Site abuts the settlement boundary of the village of Albourne along its eastern edge where it bounds a small community space (The Millennium Garden), the Albourne CE Primary School and the rear garden boundaries of residential properties along the Street to the south of the village.
- 1.7. Henfield Road and Church Lane bound the Site to the north and south respectively.
- 1.8. Inholmes Farm fronts onto Henfield Road.
- 1.9. Residential properties extend along Church Lane along the Site's southern boundary and include Spring Cottage, Welcroft Cottages, New Cottage and Oak Tree Cottage.
- 1.10. Listed Buildings are located within the village, with the majority concentrated within the Albourne Conservation Area to the south of the village and fronting onto the Street.
- 1.11. Agricultural fields and open countryside are located to the west and northwest of the Appeal Site with mature trees forming a boundary between the Appeal Site and the fields to the west. A public footpath (Path 15_1Al) runs through the centre of the Site running east to west between the central and southern fields.
- 1.12. To the east of the site is another public footpath (Path 12_1Al) which runs north to south along the eastern boundary of the site, connecting The Street to Church Lane.
- 1.13. The settlement boundary of Albourne is formed by development fronting onto the Street. The B2118 forms the eastern edge of the village. The A23 lies 200m to the west of the village and is a busy commuter link from Brighton to London.

Designations and Landscape Value

- 1.14. The Site is not covered by any national or local landscape designations. It is not considered to be a valued landscape in the context of paragraph 174a of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 1.15. The whole of the Appeal Site is situated within the countryside as defined within the Mid Sussex District Plan and the Albourne Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.16. It abuts the settlement edge of the Mid Sussex village of Albourne which is partially designated as a Conservation Area. The Site abuts the Conservation Area boundary along its south eastern corner and several Listed Buildings back onto it.
- 1.17. The boundary of the South Downs National Park lies approximately 1.7km to the south. The elevated scarp contains pronounced topographical features including Wolstonbury Hill, Newtimber Hill and Devil's Dyke. These are prominent in distant views to the south from within the Site. The nearest feature is Wolstonbury Hill – its summit is 3.38km south of the Site's southern (and nearest) boundary.
- 1.18. The most sensitive landscape features within the Site include a small orchard to the north, mature hedgerows and trees along the boundaries and the public footpaths contained within its boundary. The Site and its setting are typical of the Low Weald landscape, however the landscape is not rare. The most sensitive visual receptors are residents and walkers currently enjoying views across the Site towards the South Downs Scarp and / or the Conservation Area, as well as those appreciating the undeveloped rural setting to Albourne.
- 1.19. Dark Skies maps for the UK (CPRE) demonstrate that the Site and its immediate setting does not fall within an area of dark skies. The A23 corridor and built-up areas of Albourne, Sayers Common and Hurstierpoint currently present night time activity.

Landscape Character

- 1.20. At a national level Natural England has produced a National Character Areas Map which divides England into 159 distinct natural areas. The Site and Study Area falls within NCA 121: the Low Weald.

- 1.21. The Mid Sussex Design Guide references 'A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex' (November 2005) as the published landscape character assessment for the district. The Site and Study Area straddles the Hurstpierpoint Foothills (LCA 3) and the Hickstead Low Weald (LCA 4).
- 1.22. The northern orchard field is relatively enclosed with mature vegetated boundaries providing a strong sense of place adjacent to the Millennium Garden.
- 1.23. The central field is open and exposed with direct views to elements of the settlement edge.
- 1.24. The southern field abuts the Conservation Area boundary. Views to dwellings along The Street and Church Lane are possible. The rising land and tree belts along the western edge provide a sense of containment in views to the west. Views out to the south, to the distant South Downs Scarp, are locally valued and the site has an overall strong sense of place.

Visual Context of the Appeal Site

- 1.25. Views out from the Site demonstrate that the Zone of Visual Influence (land from which the proposed development may be visible) is mostly contained by the undulating landscape which forms the setting to the A23 road corridor.
- 1.26. The visual receptors that are likely to experience the most change are located within 1km of the Site.
- 1.27. There are views out from the Site towards the distant South Downs Scarp (over 3km to the south). Wolstonbury Hill, Newtimber Hill and Devil's Dyke are prominent elevated points on the skyline. The Site is difficult to perceive in long distance wider panoramic views from these locations.
- 1.28. The most notable visual effects will be on residents and walkers currently enjoying views across the Site and towards the South Downs Scarp. The restriction of

development to the central field will reduce the extent of these effects for some receptor groups.

Methodology for Assessing Landscape and Visual Effects of Development

- 1.29. The 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', 3rd Edition, (GLVIA3) provides best practice and widely accepted guidance on how to carry out landscape and visual assessments. The assessment methodology applied in the Allen Pyke Associates Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Addendum follow GLVIA3.
- 1.30. Due to the timing of the submission it was not possible for the appellant to obtain winter photography for all representative views but the range of illustrative viewpoints included in the LVIA and Addendum are sufficient for the Appellant, the council and the Inspector to make a judgment on anticipated visual effects.

Areas in Agreement in relation to the Appeal Scheme

- 1.31. The identification of visual receptors is agreed between the parties. They are listed below at LSoCG Table 1.

Visual Receptor Name:
VR1: Residents at Albourne #21 and #22 The Street
VR2: Visitors to Millennium Garden & Albourne School
VR3: Residents at Inholmes Farm
VR4: Users of Henfield Road
VR5: Walkers at Footpath 15_1AI
VR6: Walkers at Footpath 12_1AI
VR7: Residents at the Street (CA)
VR8: Residents at Church Lane
VR9: Residents at West House Farm

Visual Receptor Name:
VR10: Walkers at Footpath 18AI
VR11: Walkers nr Albourne Place
VR12: Walkers nr Lanehurst
VR13: Walkers at Wolstonbury Hill
VR14: Walkers at Devil's Dyke

LSoCG Table 1: Visual Receptors and their Sensitivity

1.32. The visual receptors most likely to experience notable changes in their views include:

- VR 1: Residents at #21 and #22 the Street who are located behind the school but currently have partial views the northern and central field from their upper floor windows;
- VR 2: Visitors to the Millennium Garden and Albourne School who currently enjoy views across the Site to the SDNP from within their vegetated boundaries;
- VR 3: Residents at Inholmes Farm. The owner of the land currently has views across all three of the fields towards the SDNP;
- VR 5: Walkers at Footpath 15_1AI currently have open views across the central and southern field when crossing the Site;
- VR 6: Walkers at Footpath 12_1AI currently have open views across the southern field with the central field forming the backdrop in views to the north;
- VR 7: Residents at The Street currently have open to filtered views from their elevated position within the Conservation Area. The southern field is central to their view with the northern field visible to the right and the trees along the western boundary forming a backdrop to their views;
- VR 8: Residents at Church Lane have glimpsed views from occasional upper floor windows into the southern field. The central field is also likely to be visible in their view.

- 1.33. The above receptors are acknowledged to experience moderate to substantial effects resulting from the scheme proposals. MSDC and the appellant are in agreement that the direction of these visual effects will be adverse during construction and at year 1.
- 1.34. The residual effects on views from the distant South Downs will be neutral.
- 1.35. The scheme proposals have the potential to provide a range of high-quality open spaces.
- 1.36. The future planning and delivery of the Site would present opportunities to establish maintenance procedures.
- 1.37. Methods to ensure the successful establishment and management of the landscape treatments will be subject to Condition.

Areas of Disagreement in relation to the Appeal Scheme

- 1.38. The parties disagree on the following points:

(i) Whether the Site has the capacity to accommodate new Housing

- 1.39. The Council state that the landscape of the site falls within is notably undulating and forms part of the foothills to the scarp within the SDNP which includes the prominent Wolstonbury Hill at over 200m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum). They state that the Appeal Site comprises an important part of the rural setting to Albourne.
- 1.40. In contrast the appellant concludes that the Site has limited distinctive features and is not rare. Any value placed on it is local and associated with the contribution it makes to views from the village towards the South Downs. It is an intensively farmed arable landscape and its only connection to the South Downs is the views which are possible from it. The scheme proposals have sought to retain some of these views by restricting the new housing to the central field.

- 1.41. The Council states that the proposals would fundamentally change the site from undeveloped rural land to a considerably urbanised character and that its development would present a noticeable deviation from the existing scale and pattern of the village.
- 1.42. The appellant states the proposals present an opportunity to improve the village scale and pattern by presenting an improved village centre which would draw focus away from the B2118. The appellant asserts that this has the potential to enhance the character of Albourne in the long term.

(ii) Whether the residual landscape effects have been adequately assessed

- 1.43. There remains disagreement on whether the landscape benefits of the scheme will outweigh the loss of a greenfield site and the associated change in landscape character and whether the residual landscape effects have the potential to be beneficial in the long term. The appellant identifies the potential to enhance the local landscape value of the site overall. The Council assesses effects for most landscape receptors to be adverse.

(iii) Whether the residual effects on visual receptors will be adverse or beneficial

- 1.44. The Appellant concludes residual beneficial effects on receptors who will have their most valued views (views to the South Downs Scarp) retained in addition to having the potential to see additional positive elements introduced into their views. It considers the most valued views in each instance.
- 1.45. The Council states that the visual amenity will be permanently disrupted along the PROW network with urban influences also intruding on the existing sense of tranquillity and rurality.
- 1.46. The Appellant states, and will seek to demonstrate, that there will be a permanent enhancement to walkers using the existing and enhanced public right of way network as a result of the proposals. They claim the parameter plans set the basis for an attractive village edge and an appropriate density which will front positively only new public realm.

(iv) Relationship of the Appeal Site to the Landscape Policies of the Development Plan

- 1.47. The Appellant concludes that, overall, the new development will provide an appropriate extension to the village without any undue significant residual adverse effects on landscape or visual receptors. They claim the proposals have the potential to deliver a high quality, exemplary design which is responsive to its setting and will bring a range of benefits to local wildlife and the existing and extended community thereby complying with planning policy and design guidance at a National, Local and Neighbourhood Level. The proposals present an enhancement to the settlement edge and its relationship with the countryside. They provide a platform for the local people to shape their surroundings and to develop an extension to the village which is visually attractive and responsive to design guidance. They accord with the plan led system of development management that is set out in paragraphs 15 and 134 of the NPPF, Policy DP12 of the District Plan and Policy ALC1 of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.48. The Council concludes that the proposed development does not maintain or enhance the quality of the rural landscape character of the site and surroundings, placing it in conflict with Policy DP12 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and Policy ALC1 of the Albourne Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan. In addition, by not being sensitive to the countryside setting and intruding on the character of the Millenium Garden, the appeal scheme does not adhere to Policy DP26 of the District Plan. The Council also assert that the appeal proposals conflict with NPPF Paragraph 130, sub-section C, as they are not sympathetic to local character and the landscape setting for the site. The scheme also fails to recognise the intrinsic value of the countryside, placing it in conflict with NPPF Paragraph 174(b).

Signed Agreement

Signed on behalf of Mid Sussex District Council:

Bobby Browne Dated: Jul 17, 2023

Signed on behalf of Croudace Homes Ltd

Catherine Ritson Dated: 17/07/2023

Signature: 

Email: robert.browne@w-wa.co.uk




Landscape Statement of Common Ground v5 170723_signed CR

Final Audit Report

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