OUR REF: SR/PE/2021/0349/E
**ASK FOR: Mr S Robins Tel: 01892 602518**
DATE: 16 July 2021
YOUR REF: MWB/15693

Wealden District Council

Mark Bewsey MRTPI

Head of Planning and Environmental Services

**DHA Planning**

Dear Mr. Bewsey,

**PE/2021/0349/E**
***ONE OFF MAJOR***
**95NO. DWELLINGS**
**LAND AT MOCKBEGGARS FARM, LONDON ROAD, UCKFIELD**

I refer to the above matter following out recent meeting on MS Teams. This letter reflects the broad topics and advice given during that discussion and before summarising that, I would take the opportunity of thanking you and your client for engaging with the Council at pre-application stage.

**Site and Context**

This is set out in your pre-application bundle and I need not repeat it here.

**Principle**

The site is located outside of any defined settlement boundary where planning policies (DC17, GD2, WCS6) would not normally support residential development in locations such as this. This is because new residential developments are directed to sustainable locations where future occupiers are readily able to access services and amenities of towns without the need for unsustainable transport nodes (Para 108 NPPF). The closest town is close by at Uckfield which does have a development boundary and key services and amenities.

It is recognised by the council that it cannot demonstrate an up-to-date five year housing land supply (5YHLS).

With no 5yr supply the NPPF would be a significant material consideration. Para 79 of the NPPF seeks to restrict isolated new development in rural areas. This site being set outside or

disability confident EMPLOYER

south east LABC

**Wealden District Council, Vicarage Lane, Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 2AX**
T **01323 443322** F **01892 602777**
**planning@wealden.gov.uk** **www.wealden.gov.uk**

at the very periphery of Uckfield would not be isolated in the context of the NPPF. Development would still need to be shown to be sustainable in terms of access to/support for existing rural services and alternatives to the private car.

You make the point that the site is not that remote from key services, with footpath links form the site down to Ringles Cross and along London Road into Uckfield. Whebn we met you had not recived the comments form ESCC Highway Authority and I expect they will want to see enhancement to footway provision, and/or a crossing point. I also mentioned the SoS comments in regard to the Downlands site, which although some time ago now, did argue against major growth on this side of Uckfield due to dislocation from key services.

**General layout, open space and landscaping**

We spent some time debating this during our meeting.

On open space there are several areas in the layout but these take the form of buffers to adjacent Ancient Woodland (Round Wood) and trees, a centralised play area all divided into two section by the central hedge/tree belt.

I do see that arrangement of site elements has been designed to respond to important landscape and ecological constraints, including extensive areas of Ancient Woodland at Round Wood. This is to be welcomed but those buffers are to ease development away from the woodland edge and that being so, it cannot be regarded as formal open space. A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment should accompany any reserved matters application to support any reduction in the 20m Ancient Woodland Buffer Zone.

The gardens spaces to the eastern side of the site (plots 86-95) do not look deep enough to avoid long shade being cast over amenity areas of the proposed houses. There does not appear to be any on site surface water management, and that would take up more space.

We spoke about the plots at 48-53 and 65-80 shown as flat blocks. Am afraid I am far from persuaded that the site should accommodate any flats, let alone 21 units. This is a peripheral site between Uckfield and Five Ash Down. It is not a dense urban area where we might look to deliver a greater density of development. I suggest omission of the apartment blocks which is not a comment made lightly and I fully recognise it will affect numbers, but am trying to guide you on issues. Please consider the request carefully.

Sufficient space needs to be provided for open space and recreation in accordance with policies LR3 and LR5 of the Wealden Local Plan and the draft SPG Outdoor Open Space 2003. Open amenity space requirements are based on the following:

- 1 bed units: 17 sq m Youth/adult, 2.5 sq m equipped children's play space and 4.5sq m casual informal play space per dwelling;
- 2 bed units: 34 sq m Youth/adult, 5 sq m equipped children's play space and 9sqm casual informal play space per dwelling;
- 3 bed units: 51 sq m Youth/adult, 7.5 sq m equipped children's play space and 13.5sqm casual informal play space per dwelling;
- 4 bed units: 68 sq m Youth/adult, 10 sq m equipped children's play space and 18sqm casual informal play space per dwelling;
- 5 + bed units: 85 sq m Youth/adult, 12.5 sq m equipped children's play space and 22.5sqm casual informal play space per dwelling.

The development will be required to provide all the casual informal and equipped children's play space on site. Youth and adult recreation and amenity space should also be provided on site. It is clearly recognised that the site would not be suitable for sports pitches etc, however youth and adult space can include allotments, fitness trails, MUGA, tennis courts etc. If it is not possible to accommodate all the youth and adult requirements on site, it may be possible to pay

a contribution towards the residual requirements that are provided off-site, however this would be dependent on a scheme being identified in the locality that the contributions would go towards.

**Highways**

A pre-application transport assessment has been sought and when we met, you had not received a response.

**https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/environment/planning/applications/development-control/roads/tdc-planning-apps/**

Any development on site would need to be served by a safe access with appropriate visibility splays in both directions (40mph road requires visibility splays of 2.4m x 120m). A transport assessment is likely to be required if an application is made to demonstrate this. Appropriate on site turning and parking on site would need to be provided. I am of the informal opinion that a Road Safety Audit will be required for any proposed development.

**Ecology and Arboriculture**

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and any subsequent surveys arising will be required as part of any submission. I understand that you are awaiting the outcomes of a PEA.

As noted above the sit lies abuts a parcel of Ancient Woodland and a designated priority habitat. The development has been stepped away by 15m, which is the minimum distance requirement for this habitat. Due to the size of the development and recreational pressure, a greater separation distance maybe required. An arboriculture survey would be required.

**Flood risk**

The site appears to fall outside of Flood Zones 2 and 3. A flood risk assessment is be required as the site is over 1 ha and falls within flood zone 1. Details on foul water and surface water drainage should be submitted with any application, addressing the site specifics. As noted, I am concerned no SuDs features are shown. Please look carefully at this as in my mind it will affect your layout.

The Council supports the use of SUDS based on natural features as opposed to tanked systems/cellular storage. For the avoidance of doubt, swales should be used to convey surface water as opposed to piped systems wherever possible. The Council does not support the use of permeable paving along access roads as in the past ESCC Highways have not adopted these roads. This results in higher service charges for future occupants and if the appropriate maintenance is not regularly carried out the paving can become silted and therefore impact on the effectiveness of the drainage solution and flooding risks. The Council's preference is for the use of natural drainage systems (e.g. swales and attenuation ponds). The maintenance of these can be part of the landscape strategy (as framed in the s106) in addition to the amenity and biodiversity benefits.

The bank profiles of the attenuation ponds and swales should be graded and stepped to avoid safety issues being raised by future occupants and therefore the land take for attenuation ponds, swales, ditches should take account of this including the need to allow appropriate access for maintenance.

**Affordable Housing and Custom/Self Build**

Due to the size of the development site, the development would be subject to affordable housing contributions at 35%. There is an identified local need for smaller affordable units.

*Recent Extract from housing register*

| Size of unit | Number of applicants | Percentage of register | Proposed with application | Percentage of units proposed |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 bedroom | 327 | 51% | 3 | 37.5% |
| 2 bedroom | 194 | 30% | 3 flats<br>2 houses | 62.5% |
| 3 bedrooms | 94 | 15% | - | - |
| 4 (+) bedrooms | 24 | 4% | - | - |
| **Total** | **639** | **100%** | **8** | **100%** |

Please be mindful of the Affordable Housing update and the provision of first homes First Homes - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) and the transition period associated.

We have a deficiency of Custom and Self Build units and unmet need from our register. We would look to secure 5% of units in the layout for this accommodation.

**Ashdown Forest**

The proposal is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the Ashdown Forest and therefore it would be necessary to determine if the proposal has a likely significant effect on the Ashdown Forest SPA and the SACs. The site falls inside the 7km zone within which SANGS and SAMMS mitigation for recreational pressure on the Ashdown Forest SPA where a financial contribution (£6170 per dwelling) can be paid to mitigate. Where CIL is paid for a development this would cover the SANGS/SAMMS payment but an agreement is still required to ensure either payment or CIL is paid.

Following the 2019 local plan enquiry there would be no in combination impacts from the proposed dwellings from vehicular movements on the SACs them falling within the quantum of development accepted as not having a likely significant effect under the plan enquiry process.

**Other Matters**

The development would be CIL liable Links to the Councils CIL pages Community Infrastructure Levy - Wealden District Council - Wealden District Council

The Council have a new Local Validation List Link to the Local Validation List Wealden-District-Council-Validation-Requirements-Jan-2021-v3.pdf

Any development, if found to be acceptable is likely to be subject to a s106 agreement for affordable housing, alongside securing highways works.

It is recommended by officers to engage with the Parish Council and neighbours prior to the submission of any application. Please see our Statement of Community Involvement - Wealden District Council - Wealden District Council

**Conclusion**

Overall, as discussed whilst the site is located outside the development boundary, there has been significant development which has breached the development boundary and the site is likely to be deemed acceptable for residential development. As noted above part of the site does fall within proximity to Ancient Woodland/Priority habitat. These are constraints which would need to be fully considered and addressed within the design and layout of the site.

In part, the layout scheme shows promise. There are areas of the site that with some adjustment could create a sense of place and add to the quality of the area whilst delivering much need housing.

However, there are elements that in my view do need reappraisal. There some parts to the site that have too much development, the flat blocks look awkward and out of place. Some of the fine detail work (parking numbers, bays, alignments etc.) together with points of concern (incorporation of SuDS and buffers to the Ancient Woodland etc.), all point to an adjusted layout. Fundamentally, it looks like considerably fewer units being realised on this site.

To be clear, the draft scheme as currently presented would not receive officer support. The advice whilst expressed on a without prejudice basis sets out what can be done to resolve these issues and secure officer support.

Thank you again for liaising with the Council at pre-application stage.

Yours sincerely



Stacey Robins
**Head of Planning & Environmental Services**