

Landscape Architect Response to Planning Application

The Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992

Date 1st February 2021

Application Number WSCC/052/20

Description The construction of a 1.3km single carriageway with a 3m wide shared cycleway/footway, 2.5m wide central island, one uncontrolled pedestrian crossing with a central island to enable users of the PRow to cross the carriageway, three roundabouts, provision of hard and soft landscaping, road markings, traffic signals, bus stops, and signalised pedestrian crossings, construction of a substation building; installation of a noise barrier, and associated works.

Address Land to the north of Eastergate and north-west of Barnham, PO22 0DF

Summary Response: Advice given.

Comments

1. The application site is located on land to the north of Eastergate and to the north west of Barnham, to the north of Bognor Regis within Arun District. The application comprises Phase 1 of the A29 Realignment Scheme which would connect the A29 south of Eastergate Lane to the B2233 Barnham Road, west of Downfield Road. Phase 2 would form the southern part and will be subject to a separate planning application.
2. The application site is approximately 11.8 hectares (ha) in size comprising 9.2ha of land for the proposed scheme and an additional 2.6ha of land for use temporarily for construction compounds and access, required to implement to proposed scheme. The application site begins on the A29 Fontwell Avenue at its junction with Northfield Farmhouse and Eastgate Lane. It extends approximately 214m south west along the A29 Fontwell Avenue to a point opposite Westview, a detached residential property located on the east side of Fontwell Avenue and incorporating Folly Foot Farm. At this point, the Application Site extends approximately 818m south east over arable fields, woodland, orchard, and areas of managed grassland where it abuts the north-west boundary of the properties in Ewens Gardens. The application site then extends south-west for a distance of approximately 549m, bordering the north western boundary of the properties in Murrell Gardens, and extending between the south-eastern boundary of Fordingbridge Industrial Estate and the side boundary with Greenoaks, a detached property, until it joins the B2233 Barnham Road. The application site then extends approximately 214m along the B2233 Barnham Road between the frontage of Fordingbridge Industrial Estate to the north west and its junction with Downview Road to the south-east. From the B2233 Barnham Road, the application site extends approximately 241m further south-west over land currently occupied by Fleurie Nursery.
3. The application site extends over arable fields, woodland, orchard, areas of managed grassland and paddocks. The land is classified as having high quality agricultural land (Grade 1).
4. The land to the south and west of the application site is allocated for housing, most of which forms part of Strategic Housing Allocation SD5 of the Arun Local Plan 2011-2031, with the remaining part, closest to the village core, identified in Policy H1 of the Barnham and Eastergate Neighbourhood Development Plan as a site for at least 60 units.

Landscape Architect Response to Planning Application

5. Context/ baseline assessment

- i. **Landscape Character.**

The major part of the application site, to the north of Barnham Road, site lies within landscape character area (LCA) SC8 Fontwell Upper Coastal Plain. The area south of Barnham Road lies within LCA SC9 Chichester to Yapton Coastal Plain as identified in the West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment.
- ii. **Historic Landscape character.**

The major part of the site, is identified as lying within the Historic Landscape Characterisation Broad Character Type 'Horticulture' and the Historic Landscape Characterisation Character Type 'Orchard' with the eastern side being characterised as 'Informal Fieldscapes' and 'Modern Field Amalgamations'. Historic map examination suggests that the western part of the site has been the subject of subdivision over time and the eastern part has been amalgamated.
- iii. **Designations.**

At its closest the South Downs National Park lies approx. 1.4km to the north of the application site. There are no designated ecological sites within the immediate vicinity but there are areas classified on the Priority Habitat Inventory as Traditional Orchards within the site. There are a number of heritage assets and conservation areas in the surrounding area, the closest being the Grade II Choller Farmhouse which lies approx. 400m to the north east. Church Lane Eastergate Conservation Area lies at its closest, 400m from the application site, centring around Manor Farm (Grade II) and St George's Church (Grade II*),

PROW.
The application site is crossed by footpath 318 which runs northwards from Barnham Road and lies to the west of Fordingbridge Industrial Estate.
- iv. **Common Land and Open Access Land.**

There is no Common or Open Access Land in the immediate vicinity of the application site.
- v. **Settlement:**

Eastergate is a small village with historic cores centred on the junction of Barnham Road/A29 and around Manor Farm and which has extended eastwards.
- vi. **Tranquillity.**

Based on anecdotal evidence of undertaking field survey work, the site is generally tranquil despite occasional traffic noise and the proximity of the settlement.
- vii. **Visibility and Views.**

Due to the relatively flat landform and the amount of woodland cover it is likely that this will not be a highly visible development except in near views of the site, although traffic movements on the elevated highway and lighting columns will increase the development's visibility, particularly at night.

6. Relevant landscape-related planning policy.

Landscape Architect Response to Planning Application

Arun Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted July 2018)

Policy SD SPIa (Strategic Approach)
Policy SD SP3 (Preventing Coalescence)
Policy GI SPI (Green Infrastructure and Development)
Policy LAN DMI (Protection of Landscape Character)
Policy P SPI (Design)
Policy D DMI (Aspects of Form and Design Quality)
Policy QE SPI (Quality of the Environment)

Barnham and Eastergate Neighbourhood Development Plan 2014-2029

Policy GA2 (Footpath and Cycle path Network).

7. The submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)

7.1. An LVIA has been prepared by WSP on behalf of the developer WSCC in support of the proposed development. The LVIA is included within the submitted Environmental Statement at Chapter 10 and the Methodology at Appendix 10.1.

8. Assessment methodology

8.1. The methodology has been reviewed and is considered acceptable.

9. Landscape baseline

9.1. For a 'better understanding of the local context' a number of more fine-grained character areas have been identified by the applicant as shown in Figure 10.3 and described at 10.4.21 to 10.1.26. I am somewhat surprised that LCA1: Eastergate Village, which is described as having conservation areas, listed buildings and TPO is only ascribed a value of 'low' which equates to 'Typically an undesignated landscape/feature' as described in Table 2.1 of Appendix 10.1. This scoring seems inconsistent.

9.2. It is stated at 10.4.16 that the study area is covered by WSCC LCA SC8 Fontwell Upper Coastal Plain, however the part of the site that lies to the south of Barnham Road is within LCA SC9 Chichester to Yapton Coastal Plain which extends south and eastwards and includes parts of the study area.

10. Assessment of landscape effects

10.1. Whilst the fine-grained study of the landscape is appropriately divided into local landscape character areas, I do not consider that enough consideration has been given to some of the individual elements that comprise landscape character (e.g. tranquillity, vegetation, access etc) and to the effects on key characteristics of landscape character as defined in the West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment and Arun Landscape Study. There should be more discussion of how typical the study area is of the LCA and how the proposals might affect the wider LCA. To that end I would wish to see

Landscape Architect Response to Planning Application

the wider LCA as a landscape receptor. Consideration should also be given to how the relevant Land Management Guidelines can inform the mitigation proposals.

10.2.As GLVIA states:

- *Even where there are useful and relevant existing Landscape character Assessments and historic landscape characterisations, it is still likely that it will be necessary to carry out specific and more detailed surveys of the site itself and perhaps its immediate setting or surroundings. This provides the opportunity to record the specific characteristics of this more limited area, but also to analyse to what extent the site and its immediate surroundings conform to or are different from the wider Landscape Character Assessments that exist, and to pick up other characteristics that may be important in considering the effects of the proposal. (GLVIA 5.16).*

10.3. The study area will inevitably undergo considerable change due to the site's allocation in the local plan as a Strategic Development Site (SD5), however I consider that more could be done to 'to prevent/avoid, reduce and where possible offset or remedy (or compensate for) any significant adverse landscape and visual effects' as set out in the methodology at 1.3.2.

11. Visual baseline

11.1. The LVIA has tested the visual envelope of the proposed development site by considering the visual baseline conditions at 7 representative viewpoints. These viewpoints have been chosen to represent different types of visual receptors and their location, reason for selection and distance from the Scheme summarised in table 10-7. Cross-referencing Table 10-7 with Figure 10.1 (which shows the location of visual receptors and photo viewpoints) and with Figure 10.4 (which contains the views) reveals a few anomalies. For example Viewpoint 2 (visual receptor 6) does not appear to be marked in the correct place on the Figure 10.1, and neither does Viewpoint 5 (visual receptor 10). Viewpoint 7 does not appear to be shown at all. It would be preferable for this system of numbering to be checked for accuracy and ideally simplified, in the interests of clarity.

12. Assessment of visual effects

12.1. I do not consider that enough consideration has been given to the effect of the proposed lighting scheme which goes beyond the stated 'lighting columns at junctions' (10.9.32) as shown in plans (Appendix 3.1) and has the potential to affect the wider landscape with columns at up to 10m in height. In addition, I consider that more could be done to 'to prevent/avoid, reduce and where possible offset or remedy (or compensate for) any significant adverse landscape and visual effects' as set out in the methodology at 1.3.2.

13. The submitted Soft Landscape Plan A29-WSP-LA-GA-001 to 005

- 13.1. The plans lack details regarding size, density and species of proposed plant material and seed mixes. This information is required to ensure the mitigation measures proposed will be effective in line with the assumptions of the submitted LVIA.
- 13.2. I consider that there is an opportunity for a greater amount of tree planting across the site including an informal avenue of trees along the main road and additional trees to the east of the acoustic barrier. These would have the added benefit of helping to mitigate the impact of the acoustic barrier which will appear dominant in views from the proposed road and give a suburban edge to the settlement. Consideration should be given to additional types of mitigation such as climbers or use of a 'green screen' to further reduce the impact of this barrier. More detail should be given regarding the appearance of the acoustic barrier including sections which show the relationship between the road, landforms, barrier and properties on Ewens Gardens, Murrell Gardens and Chantry Mead. The 'weathered steel' finish referred to may prove too industrial a finish. The proposed finish needs to be justified landscape terms.
- 13.3. Where the removal of a traditional flint wall is proposed on Fontwell Avenue, to accommodate the roundabout, I would wish consideration to be given to replacing this feature with a flint wall boundary to one of the properties to the south which are to have their frontages realigned.
- 13.4. A plan which gives an overview of the whole site and the adjacent landscape would assist in illustrating how and where new habitats connect with existing and where additional linkages could be made to enhance green infrastructure including connections with Strategic Development Site SD5.
- 13.5. More detail needs to be given regarding the '*fruiting trees to offset loss from adjacent orchard*', specifically in terms of varieties (and rootstocks) proposed. My preference would be for locally prevalent heritage varieties wherever possible. The spacing of the trees appears too wide and needs to better reflect the tree spacing of a traditional orchard. More thought should be given to the form of the orchard and its enclosure. I believe there is scope for additional native hedgerows to the south and east which could contribute towards the required Biodiversity Net Gain which is not yet achieved for linear habitats. Details of how the orchard is to be managed should be submitted, although this could be dealt with as a requirement of a planning condition.
- 13.6. Where amenity grass mix is specified, I would wish to see a species-rich mix used to ensure maximum biodiversity.
- 13.7. Detail needs to be given regarding the likely appearance of the attenuation basins and swales throughout the year, and how best they can contribute to biodiversity. It would be preferable for them to retain a certain amount of water throughout the year, where possible, to provide both biodiversity and amenity benefits.

14. The submitted Green Infrastructure Plan

14.1. Whilst this document sets out many laudable aims, I do not consider that these have been carried through to the submitted plans. In particular the illustrative sections do not appear to bear much resemblance to the final scheme. If the document is intended to form part of the planning application then greater consistency is required to ensure that it reflects the submitted design drawings and vice versa. As requested above at 13.4, a plan showing the Phase I development proposals in context should be provided, illustrating how the submitted plans enhance Green Infrastructure.

15. Conclusion

15.1. The submitted LVIA is generally sound but requires more consideration of the potential effects on landscape character, as set out above at 10.1. The visual baseline requires some clarification and diagrams should be checked (see 11.1 above) and more consideration needs to be given to the effects of the proposed lighting scheme. Where potentially significant effects have been established, there should be further discussion of potential mitigation measures.

15.2. The landscape plans require more detail and to be shown in the context of the wider landscape to demonstrate green infrastructure linkages.

15.3. The status of the Green Infrastructure Strategy needs to be confirmed and, if it is to be submitted, it needs to reflect the submitted plans.