



Horsham
District
Council

HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATION

TO:	Horsham District Council – Planning Dept
LOCATION:	Land North of East Street Rusper West Sussex
DESCRIPTION:	Erection of 18no. 2, 3 and 4 bedroom dwellings, (including 6no. affordable housing units), together with access from East Street, vehicle and cycle parking, landscaping and open space, and sustainable drainage.
REFERENCE:	DC/25/0523
RECOMMENDATION:	Holding objection / Modification

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATION:

Whilst the site demonstrates some capacity for development, further refinement of the layout, open space provision and landscaping strategy is required. This is to ensure that the proposal is landscape-led and that the likely landscape and visual effects are appropriately mitigated in order to be satisfied that the rural qualities experienced within the wider landscape can be retained.

The pre-felling of a section of protected woodland is regrettable, as it has constrained the range of viable layout solutions that could have preserved the rural approach into Rusper village. The main comments outline our concerns and provide recommendations to enhance the landscape and visual resources.

MAIN COMMENTS:

Site description & context

1. The proposed development site is located to the east of Rusper, outside of the defined Built-Up Area Boundary (BUAB), in a countryside location. It comprises a pasture field enclosed by stock fencing on all sides.
2. The immediate site context is predominately rural, characterised by its undeveloped nature and agricultural landscape features. The field slopes gently eastwards, with the southern boundary defined by mature trees and a well-vegetated understory. The eastern boundary is partially defined by hedgerow, while the northern boundary features individual, mature trees.
3. The wider landscape context presents a mixed character. To the north, south and west, the site is bordered by undeveloped fields, contributing to a strong, rural influence. Key landscape features in the surrounding area include woodland, Ancient Woodland (AW), mature trees and a large field pond, which further reinforce the rural qualities experienced on site. However, the site's eastern boundary abuts the Rusper Conservation Area and settlement edge. While the built form is low in density, it introduces an element of urbanising influence that detracts from the site's countryside setting.

4. Partial views into the site are available into site from Public Right of Way (PRoW) 1496, also known as the Sussex Border Path, which runs to the north of the site in a northeast-southwest direction. These views are experienced by receptors within the countryside, read in line with the wooded and rural context of the surrounding area. The site's open undeveloped nature positively contributes to the recreational enjoyment of the users of this footpath.
5. An informal footpath runs close to the site's northern boundary in a west-east direction, connecting at both ends to PRoW 1496. This path appears to be used additionally as a bridleway and affords open views into site.
6. The site access is proposed from East Street, a verdant east-west route, generally bounded by dense vegetation, mature trees, and steep banks on approach to Rusper. During the winter months, deciduous tree cover enables glimpse views of the undeveloped countryside which can be experienced by visual receptors travelling through the area, reinforcing its rural qualities.
7. Future development to the south of the site is expected to change the landscape character baseline by introducing residential and domestic features to the immediate context. While this will somewhat diminish the current predominately rural character, the proposed schemes are anticipated to be of a lower density, and therefore minimise the extent of suburbanisation on approach to the village of Rusper.

Landscape Character and Capacity Guidance:

8. The proposed site falls within I2 - Warnham & Rusper Wooded Ridge Landscape Character Area (LCA) as defined in the Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment (2003). The site and the surrounding contextual landscape is deemed to be representative of the local landscape character area, exhibiting many of the key characteristics, including: *undulating wooded ridges; strong pattern of shaws and hedgerows; and intricate patchwork of small pasture field*. The LCA notes that, '*the area retains a rural unspoilt character, and the historic dispersed settlement pattern is largely intact*'.
9. Key issues include: *local pressure for urban development; localised intrusion from suburban features; and poor woodland and hedgerow/shaw management*.
10. Overall sensitivity to change is high, with key sensitivities to: *any large scale housing/commercial development and small scale incremental change, e.g. erosion of the narrow country lanes*.
11. Relevant Planning and Land Management Guidelines state to:
 - a) Conserve the rural wooded character of the area. Large scale development is likely to damage the character, e.g. small scale field patterns, and would be visually prominent.
 - b) Consider appropriate traffic management strategies to reduce traffic pressures on the narrow lanes.
 - c) Restore shaws/hedgerow trees in localised areas with intensive arable farmland.
12. The Horsham District Landscape Capacity Assessment (2014) locates the proposed site within Local Landscape Character Area (LLCA) RS3. Landscape Character Sensitivity is identified by the following key relevant traits: *small to medium scale field pattern of pasture fields; fields bounded by thick hedgerows with hedgerow trees, wooded shaws and woodland; attractive hedged rural lanes; and mostly unspoilt rural character*.
13. Visual sensitivity is moderate due to visibility from PRoWs and rural lanes, and landscape value is drawn from *amenity value of public footpaths and ecological interest of woodland, including hedgerows and shaws and the adjoining Ancient Woodland*.
14. Given the above, the LLCA concludes that there is low-moderate capacity for small scale development given the mostly unspoilt rural character, stating that '*any development would need to be restricted to close to the existing settlement edge and loss of hedgerows and trees minimised*'.

Assessment

15. In the absence of a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) to demonstrate otherwise, it is our professional assessment that the proposal would give rise to adverse effects on visual amenity and have an eroding effect on the landscape character. This would be to the detriment of the current rural qualities experienced within the local landscape, particularly on the Sussex Border Path and informal footpath. In addition, the removal of trees and vegetation along East Street will increase the visibility of the development considerably, changing the character of this gateway to a much more suburban appearance as a result of the density of the built form, as well as the introduction of domestic and urbanising features, inconsistent with the countryside setting.
16. HDPF Policy 25 is a strategic policy that seeks to safeguard the natural environment and landscape character, including landform, development pattern and designated habitats, from inappropriate development. Proposals must protect, conserve and enhance landscape and townscape character, maintain and improve green infrastructure network and safeguard biodiversity sites ensuring no net loss.
17. The scheme fails to comply with Policy 25 due to the pre-emptive felling of trees, which has weakened the existing green corridor along East Street. In addition, the proposed layout is at odds with the surrounding development pattern. Both of these elements neither conserve nor enhance landscape and townscape character.
18. HDPF Policy 26 is a strategic policy, the main aim of which is to protect the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside outside BUABs. Development must be essential to the countryside location and serves a clearly defined rural function such as agriculture, recreation or the sustainable development of rural areas. The development proposals are contrary to this first part of the policy.
19. The second part of HDPF 26, requires development to not lead to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside, and to protect the landscape character, including its natural features, development patterns, historical and ecological qualities and tranquillity.
20. The scheme is likely to lead to an increase of the overall level of activity in the countryside, thereby diminishing the tranquillity and rural qualities experienced within the area. This adverse effect is further exacerbated when considered alongside other incremental changes resulting from nearby approved development schemes. Additionally, the proposed layout is likely to give rise to adverse effects on key features and characteristics of the landscape character area.
21. It is acknowledged that the site was proposed for allocation within HDC's emerging Local Plan, under Strategic Policy HA15: Rusper Housing Allocations (RS2) for up to 20 dwellings. Although the Local Plan is currently on hold, this indicates that the site has been identified as having some capacity for development. This context is recognised in our assessment; however, any future proposals must still demonstrate that landscape and visual effects are appropriately addressed and that the rural character of the area is conserved and in accordance with the current plan policies.
22. Strategic Policy HA15 stated that proposals must have regard to the setting and character of the Rusper Conservation Area to the west and maintain the rural approach to the village. In our professional judgement, to ensure the development integrates sensitively and successfully within the receiving landscape, adjustments to the layout and a potential reduction of number of dwellings may be necessary.
23. In addition, the development must adhere to policies set out within the Rusper Neighbourhood Plan, which are directly relevant to this site:
 - a) Policy RUS5 requires that proposals within the Green Infrastructure Network, such as this site, demonstrate how they will enhance habitat connectivity and contribute to the connectivity, maintenance and improvement of the Network.
 - b) Policy RUS3 (iv) requires proposals to take into account the retention of key views out to the countryside, particularly those from the playground to the east and from the Sports Field, highlighting in particular, '*extensive views West from the sports*

field and East from behind the playground, both in the High Street are important to the character of the conservation area and the village generally. Also with the views from the footpath to Lambs Green they are all important to the overall character of Rusper Village and define the rural nature of the area'.

- c) Policy RUS3 (ix) and Policy RUS10 require that development proposals retain Rusper's dark skies status and demonstrate how light pollution is prevented.

24. These policies reinforce the need for a sensitive and landscape-led approach to development that respects the village's rural character and visual amenity.

Design Considerations

Layout & Soft Landscaping

- 25. While the enhancement of the southern boundary is welcomed, we consider there to be further opportunity to strengthen the northern boundary. The introduction of denser planting in this area will support the objectives of the LCA planning management guidelines by conserving and enhancing the wooded character. Additionally, this will also help create a more positive and well-designed transition to the surrounding countryside, softening the appearance of the development and contribute to the reduction of light pollution.
- 26. The current planting schedule proposes trees no greater than 14-16cm girth. Please revise the proposals to include a broader range of sizes, including 20-25cm girth trees as well as 30-35cm girth trees at key strategic locations, to improve the site's legibility and provide immediate structure.
- 27. While the planting palette is welcomed, we advise reconsidering the use of *Prunus spinosa* (3no) on the northern boundary. Larger-growing species would be more appropriate to achieve the desired softening and long-term landscape structure.

Open Space Strategy

- 28. Proposals must demonstrate compliance with the Horsham District Council's *Open Space, Sports & Recreation Review 2021* (OSSR). As such, a detailed land budget plan must be submitted to demonstrate how the scheme will deliver an open space strategy that aligns with the requirements of the OSSR and complies with HDPF policy 43. The plan must clearly identify the various typologies of open space and demonstrate that accessibility standards and distance buffers are achievable. Additionally, it must include a table quantifying the area allocated to each typology and confirm how the scheme meets the overall open space requirements.
- 29. Rusper is listed within the report as having a deficiency in all categories save for young people, however the largest deficiency is with Natural/Semi-Natural Green Space. Please refer to the OSSRR report for design standards.
- 30. Below is a table with the requirements generated by this size of development.

Open space required per person:			Multi-functional greenspace proposed / potential split:			Children and young people proposed / potential split:		
Allotments 1.8m ² per person	Multi-functional greenspace 43.9m ² per person	Children and young people 0.7m ² per person	Parks and Gardens 13.8m ² per person	Amenity Greenpace 5.8m ² per person	Natural and Semi-Natural 24.3m ² per person	Children 0.5m ² per person	Youth areas and facilities 0.2m ² per person	
1.8	43.9	0.7	13.8	5.8	24.3	0.5	0.2	
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
25.92	632.16	10.08	198.72	83.52	349.92	7.2	2.88	
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
31.68	772.64	12.32	242.88	102.08	427.68	8.8	3.52	
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
9.72	237.06	3.78	74.52	31.32	131.22	2.7	1.08	
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Area required for each typology (m²)	67.32	1641.86	26.18	516.12	216.92	908.82	18.7	7.48
Area required for each typology (hectares)	0.006732	0.164186	0.002618	0.051612	0.021692	0.090882	0.00187	0.000748
TOTAL OPEN SPACE REQUIREMENT - SQUARE METRES	1735.36			TOTAL OPEN REQUIREMENT - HECTARES	0.173536			

31. Particular concern is raised with the quality of the 'open space' areas indicated within the opportunities plan and whether it meets the various requirements. For example, a large portion of this space comprises a slope and an attenuation basin. As per the OSSR, SuDS schemes will not be counted towards the amenity space quantity standard as the area could not be used for recreational purposes, however it could count towards natural and semi-natural greenspace provision for example.
32. While we acknowledge the spatial constraints of the site, we also recommend that not all open spaces be designated as meadow. To support the broader range of recreational opportunities and open space typologies of the OSSR, provision should include amenity grassland which is suitable for informal play, a kickabout area, picnics, etc.
33. Where meadow is proposed, please ensure mown paths are detailed for relevant pedestrian access. Additionally, the inclusion of interpretive signage is encouraged to help educate future residents on meadow appearance, ecological value, and management needs.

SuDS & Drainage

34. The proposed surface water attenuation strategy focuses predominantly on end of pipe solutions, concentrating on the water storage and slow-release mechanisms.. We encourage revisiting the surface water strategy to align more closely with the 4 pillars of SuDS which include amenity, water quality, water quantity and biodiversity. There may be scope to introduce a hierarchy of shallow landscape features (no more than 150mm to 300mm deep) such as swales, rain gardens, rills, blue green roofs, etc. The introduction of these features could reduce the size or depth of the proposed attenuation basin, while also providing opportunity for better integration within the landscape and positively contributing to amenity space.
35. The basins should be planted and combined with variations in vegetation structure to ensure habitat diversity and landscape effect. These should be included within the planting schedule and their specific maintenance within the LMMP.

36. The ground contouring, inlet and outlet design should be carefully considered to maximise the amenity value. We recommend a soft, naturalistic approach to headwalls, for example, by introducing planting and cladding in Horsham stone.

37. We recommend blue green roofs are introduced to ancillary structures such as bin and cycle stores. If proposed, we expect to see details within a plant schedule and specific maintenance within the LMMP.

38. We note potential conflict between the proposed drainage run and the landscape scheme along the eastern boundary. In areas where proposed tree planting is in close proximity to underground services, we request the inclusion of tree root barriers to mitigate the risk of root intrusion and ensure the long term integrity of both the drainage infrastructure and planting scheme. Locations of all proposed root barriers must be indicated on the landscape plan.

Other

39. Chemical fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides including glyphosate are not to be applied at any time due to impacts on existing and proposed landscape features, and the protection of their ecological features. Alternative methods for weeding should be considered such as hot water systems, electronic control systems or steel brushing in combination with acetic acid spraying. Please remove mention of glyphosate-based weed killers from Drainage Management & Maintenance Plan and reflect alternative methods as above or hand weeding alone.

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS: If you're minded to recommend the application for approval without the concerns addressed above, please include the following informatives:

INF12 - Landscape Details

The applicant is advised that full details of the hard and soft landscape works include the provision of, but shall not be necessarily limited to:

- Details of existing and proposed levels for all external earthworks associated with the landscape proposals (including SuDS). Such details to include cross sections where necessary
- Updated planting and seeding plans and schedules specifying species, planting size, densities and plant numbers
- Tree pit and staking/underground guying details, including details for sloping ground where necessary
- A written hard and soft landscape specification (National Building Specification compliant), including ground preparation, cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment
- Hard surfacing materials - layout, colour, size, texture, coursing, levels
- Walls, steps, fencing, gates, railings or other supporting structures - location, type, heights and materials
- Minor artefacts and structures - location and type of refuse and other storage units, lighting columns and lanterns

INF13 - Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan

A Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan is a site-specific strategy that demonstrates how the site will be managed and maintained in order to fulfil the original intentions of the applicant and guarantees that the scheme and the retained landscape and ecology structures are maintained and improved for the lifetime of the development. A guidance note to content and layout can be found [here](#).

<p>The applicant is advised that we recommend that chemical fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides including glyphosate are not to be applied at any time due to impacts on existing and proposed landscape features, and the protection of their ecological features.</p> <p>Alternative methods for weeding should be considered and specified, such as hot foam or hot water systems, steel brushing in combination with acetic acid spraying, electronic control systems, as well as hand weeding by careful digging or selective scything.</p>	
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DATE:	19/06/2025
SIGNED OFF BY:	Inês Watson CMLI Specialists Team Leader (Landscape Architect)
DATE:	23/06/2025