

TECHNICAL NOTE: VIEWS OF THE SOUTH DOWNS

Land at New Place Farm, Pulborough

Planning Application Reference: DC/24/1676

Proposal: Reserved Matters comprising details of 160 no dwellings, associated internal access roads, parking and landscaping for areas east of the right of way. Details of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale to be considered.

9 July 2025

INTRODUCTION

This Technical Note has been prepared by Finc Architects on behalf of Barratt Redrow Southern Counties (formerly Barratt David Wilson Southern Counties) pertaining to consultee comments provided by Horsham District Council Consultation (HDC) with regard to the proposed north-south open space within the site and views thereby created towards the South Downs ridgeline.

The Landscape Team at Finc Architects was appointed by BDW Southern Counties in May 2024 to prepare a Reserved Matters application, which was submitted in October 2024. Comments from HDC were received in March 2025, which include matters relating to the framing of views towards the South Downs ridgeline.

The South Downs National Park (SDNP) is located approximately 800m to the south of the site at its nearest point. However the site is approximately 6.8km away from the main ridgeline of the South Downs which appears to the south when viewed from the east-west oriented Public Right of Way (PRoW) within the site's northern extent. For clarity, we refer to views of the South Downs ridgeline throughout this Technical Note, rather than the wider designated landscape.

Following receipt of comments, a site visit was conducted in May 2025 to assess the visibility of the South Downs ridgeline from the site.

The HDC comments of relevance to this TN are highlighted below in blue.

'Significant changes have been made to the framework plan and concern is raised with the effect this has on the existing landscape features; but also, the landscape concept design and key features, such as the landscape framework and the viewing corridor through the site, which is now significantly diluted'.

and

'central north-south open space was intended to frame some long-distance views towards the South Downs, with an equipped play area, paths and breathing room within the development site – the proposed layout marginalises this open space, fills it with roadways, engineered features, parking bays and a very dense arrangement of houses, gardens parking and likely the associated residential garden boundaries. In contrast to the sweeping vista envisaged in the outline scheme, the new layout squeezes this open space at both ends'.

REVIEW OF OUTLINE PROPOSALS

In order to provide context to this Technical Note, a review has been undertaken of the approved outline proposals, including the LVA prepared by EDP.

Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) July 2022, EDP

Key relevant points from EDP Site Assessment are as follows:

- *'Visually, the site is well contained to the north, south and east by topography, woodland belt or hedgerow. To the south the site is contained somewhat by hedgerows along its southern boundary, although the poor quality of this hedgerow (adjacent to Drovers Lane) and the southward slope of the site limits this containment.'*
- *'Scenic Quality: The landform of the site creates views to Pulborough and the South Downs National Park at high points and in open land parcels. Whilst views to the SDNP are present on-site, their quality is diminished by the urban setting and the modern development along rising landform in the foreground of the views. The dwellings along Drovers Lane and housing in the south-east of Pulborough are prominent in the foreground and reinforce the semi-urban context of the site.'*

We would agree with the findings of the EDP LVA, particularly that the landform of the site allows views towards the South Downs ridgeline from high points, and that existing vegetation and built form to the south of the site are partially enclosing. However, we would also note that views of the South Downs ridgeline are not experienced from the southern part of the site due to the lower lying landform and the noted enclosing features adjacent to and beyond the southern boundary.

With regard to design and mitigation, the EDP LVA states:

- *'The further addition of a north to south green corridor in the centre of the site, with low to medium height planting, will create an open corridor, framing and enhancing the view to the South Downs National Park ...'*
- *An open green space corridor running north-south through the centre of the site that connects the proposed development with the countryside park but also provides local amenity and views towards the South Downs National Park.'*

The changes in landform which characterise the site were a guiding factor in the design of the proposed development as noted by the EDP LVA (paragraph 7.7):

'The proposals include properties up to a maximum of two storeys across the majority of the site, with taller houses limited to the southern part of the site. This ensures that the development responds to the prevailing topography.'

It is therefore noted that the purpose of the proposed north-south open space is, in broad terms, to frame views of the South Downs ridgeline. However, no guidance has been provided in the LVA as to what specific features or extent of the ridgeline are proposed to be framed.

EDP Viewpoint 2 (Figure 1 below) is located in the PRoW to the west of the northern end of the proposed north-south open space. Figure 2 (Finc Viewpoint 1) shows a summer view from further east on the PRoW, aligning with the northern end of the proposed open space.

Figure 1: EDP LVA Viewpoint 2



Figure 2: Finc Viewpoint 1



The EDP and Finc views both demonstrate that existing views from the PRoW are directed southwards towards the distant South Downs ridgeline, which is framed to the east and west by existing vegetation within and around the Site. Rackham Hill, a local high point on the ridgeline (at approximately 193m AOD), forms a central focus for the view.

We note that the South Downs ridgeline is seen above and beyond an intervening ridgeline in Pulborough, approximately 300m south of the Site. Existing vegetation on the ridgeline punctuates the skyline in places and partially screens the less elevated parts of the ridgeline.

Further south within the site, the falling landform results in reducing visibility of the South Downs ridgeline such that it becomes entirely screened in the approximate location of the east-west primary road.

Figure 3 shows the outline Development Framework and Land Budget Plan prepared by EDP. The plan illustrates a funnelled alignment to the proposed north-south open space, with a narrow northern opening and the northern section facing due north and widening slightly as it approaches the proposed east-west primary road. To the south of the road, it becomes wider and turns towards the south-west. Outward views in this location are likely to be contained by vegetation on the southern boundary.

Figure 3: Development Framework and Land Budget Plan, EDP



On the basis of our review of the site and proposals, including field surveys, we consider this approach will not provide sweeping views of the South Downs ridgeline that were envisaged in the outline application, as the narrow northern end of the open space would reduce the opportunity for views of the South Downs ridgeline from a more elevated position where the PRoW is located. Conversely, the widest part of the proposed open space is located further down the sloping landform, where no views of the South Downs ridgeline are possible.

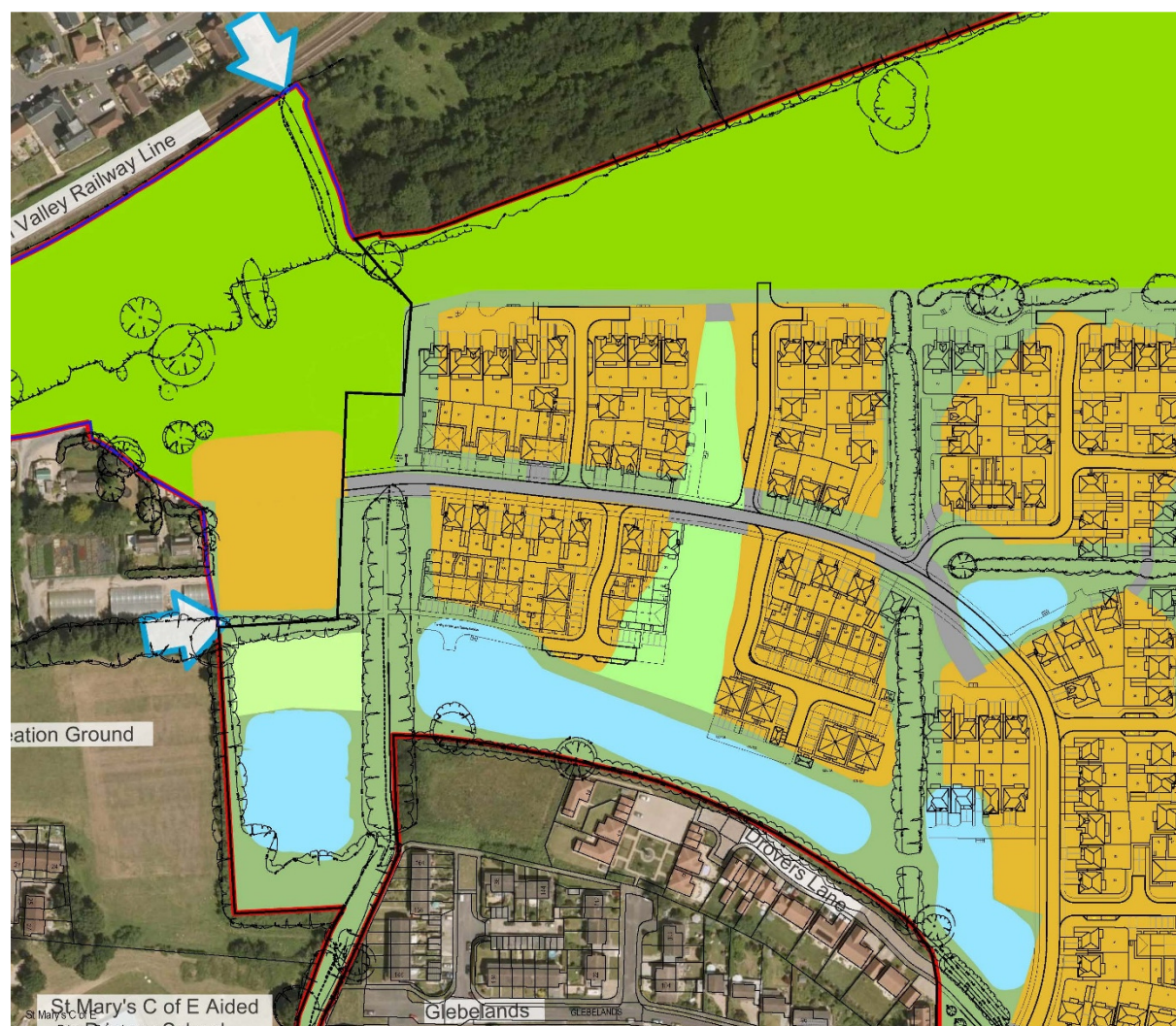
RESERVED MATTERS DESIGN RESPONSE

We therefore consider that a more appropriate approach to fulfil the principles set out in the approved application would entail the provision of a widened space in the northern extent, allowing a greater appreciation of views from the PRow and capitalising on the elevated position and greater intervisibility with the South Downs ridgeline.

Due to the significant fall in levels, proposed built form in the southern part of the site is unlikely to interfere with views from the PRow and the northern part of the open space, therefore it is considered that the widening of the northern part of the open space can be offset by a slight narrowing in the southern part of the site, without compromising the purpose of the open space.

An overlay of the EDP Development Framework and Land Budget Plan and the updated Reserved Matters layout is provided in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Overlay Development Framework and RM Layout



The overlay demonstrates a significant widening of the northern gateway to the open space, providing greater potential for the enjoyment of elevated views to the South Downs. The alignment of the space is broadly north-south and thus would focus on the most dramatic and

elevated part of the ridgeline (Rackham Hill). The space is continuous from northern to southern parcels and proposed built form is set back further from the built development parameter on the eastern side, allowing a greater appreciation of views in a southerly direction, rather than gentle curve to the south-west proposed at outline stage.

On the western side, the southern parcel extends beyond the limit of the built form parameter, however due to the lower lying nature of this part of the Site, and its position to the west of the main visual focus, it is unlikely that proposed houses in this location will interrupt views of the South Downs ridgeline.

On this basis, it is considered that a variation in the approved development parameters is justified to better meet the stated aims in terms of the creation and enhancement of views towards the South Downs ridgeline.