HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATION

TO:	Horsham District Council – Planning Dept
LOCATION:	Delta Shoreham Road Small Dole West Sussex
DESCRIPTION:	Outline application for the erection of 7No self-build dwellings with all matters reserved.
REFERENCE:	DC/24/1933
RECOMMENDATION:	Holding Objection / Modification

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATION:

The application is seeking outline permission for the erection of 7 self-build dwellings with all matters reserved. In principle, the development is not essential and will increase the overall level of activity in its countryside location, contrary to policy 26, however we are cognisant of the 5YLS issue and different planning tests as result.

The proposals will give rise to adverse landscape and visual effects, however due to its location and immediate context, it is considered that some form of development could be accommodated within the site, but not of the amount proposed.

This application is not supported by a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA), though in our professional judgement, the indicative layout, due to the scale and density of the proposal which also result in the loss of existing boundary vegetation, will have an eroding and adverse effect on the character of the area, contrary to policies 25 and 26 of the HDPF. There is additional concern that the negligible spacing between the dwellings limits opportunities to introduce planting to mitigate for tree and vegetation clearance.

Therefore if the principle of development is found acceptable, we recommend that the number of dwellings is reduced to allow for a more sympathetic layout, one that is integrated within a landscape framework and provides a design transition to the countryside. Planting will also soften the appearance of the development and retain the verdant character of the area.

MAIN COMMENTS:

Site description and context

The proposed site is situated to the west of the settlement of Small Dole, set outside of the Built Up Area Boundary (BUAB) in a countryside location, currently comprising undeveloped agricultural land. 1no. agricultural barn with permission for change of use to residential sits immediately to the east and shares the access into the site. Ruderal vegetation and scrub is present and the site is bounded by hedgerow interspersed with mature trees on all sides. Further agricultural land abuts the western and northern boundaries and private gardens lie adjacent to the eastern boundary. To the immediate south lies horticultural land and dense vegetation.

The site's wider landscape context can be described as open countryside, being predominately undeveloped and comprising a well-defined field pattern by hedgerow, hedgerow trees and meandering water courses. Large areas of Ancient Woodland and Woodland can be found to the east, loosely connected to the site via hedgerow and vegetation found on the northern site boundary. Local Wildlife Site, Hoe Wood, forms part of this woodland, which comprises Ancient oak dominated woodland with diverse ground flora.

Proposed access to the site will be achieved by extending a private driveway off Shoreham Road. It is presumed that a large level of vegetation clearance will be needed to facilitate this access, however insufficient information is submitted to assess this.

A number of public rights of way can be found in the area, including PRoW 2775 which runs east-west to the south and west of the site, and PRoW 2773, which lies to the north and west. The openness and undeveloped nature of the surrounds is enjoyed by receptors on these routes, the views of which positively contribute to the rural character and landscape setting. Notwithstanding, views into the site from the footpath network are not available due to intervening vegetation.

Landscape character

The proposed site falls within D2 – Henfield and Small Dole Farmlands Landscape Character Area (LCA) as defined by the Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment. It also lies in close proximity to O3 - Steyning and Henfield Brooks.

The site and the surrounding contextual landscape is deemed to be representative of the local landscape character area, exhibiting many of the key characteristics of both D2 and O3, including: *small to large size regular and irregular fields with a variable hedgerow pattern; undulating landscape of low ridges and narrow valleys with small streams; arable valleysides with fragmented hedgerow pattern and small isolated woodlands;* and *largely tranquil undeveloped rural character.*

Key issues for D2 include: *previous and continuing loss of hedgerows through field rationalisation* and *visually intrusive development/suburbanisation on A2037 at Small Dole*. Overall sensitivity to change is high due to the openness of the area and its many intrinsic landscape qualities, however this is moderate in areas that are less widely visible. Planning and Land Management Guidelines for D2 and O3 state to:

- *Ensure any new development does not intrude onto visible ridgelines.*
- *Ensure any appropriate new development responds to traditional local design and materials, including flint/brick and sandstone.*
- *Carry out native tree and woodland planting around Small Dole to screen housing.*
- *Conserve and manage existing hedgerows, especially where they surround small scale irregular field patterns.*
- *Conserve tranquil, undeveloped character.*
- *Particular care should be taken to ensure that any road widening or new road crossings do not damage the character.*
- *Ensure any new development on valleysides is small scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, form and building materials.*

Considerations

Policy 26 of the HDPF requires proposals to be essential to the countryside location, be of a scale appropriate to their countryside character location, not lead, either individually or cumulatively, to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside and/or conserve, and/or enhance, the key features and characteristics of the landscape character area in which it is located.

In the absence of an LVA, it is our professional view that the proposal would give rise to an increment of activity in the countryside contrary to HDPF Policy 26 and additional light and noise pollution incurred as a result of which would detract from the tranquillity and sense of place of the countryside setting.

Furthermore, the proposals would give rise to adverse effects to the rural character of the area as result of introducing domestic and urbanising features which will occupy an otherwise undeveloped field. The amount of dwellings proposed within the block plan would appear out of place or dominant within the context of the surrounding landscape and with little scope to provide a landscape framework to help assimilate the development into the landscape.

While we are cognisant that all matters including layout are reserved for later consideration, there is concern with the scale and density of the proposal which is likely to have an adverse effect on the landscape character of the area and result in poor general amenity for future residents.

Key concern also lies in the long term retention of existing vegetation, including trees and hedgerow, which positively contribute to the verdant character of the area. We query the removal of tree T07 (Salix caprea) which lies outside of proposed built form, and trees T40 (Silver birch), T41 (Horse chestnut) & T42 (Oak) which lie outside of the red line boundary. We presume these latter trees are to be removed to create access. It is, in addition, unclear as to what extent of removal is proposed for groups of trees G01 to the south of the site, and G04 and G07 on the northern boundary. Removal of this level of vegetation will give rise to adverse effects on the character of the landscape character and immediate landscape context, as well as have the potential to further expose the development to view from the wider footpath network. Therefore the proposal in its current form does not conserve or enhance the key features and characteristics of its landscape character area, contrary to Policy 26.

We recommend that the number of dwellings is reduced and that the layout is modified in order to both retain existing trees and vegetation as well as allow for mitigation planting to soften the appearance of the development.

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS: If you're minded to recommend the application for approval without the concerns addressed above please get in touch as specific conditions will be required.

NAME:	Elly Hazael Trainee Landscape Architect (Planning)
DEPARTMENT:	Specialists Team - Strategic Planning
DATE:	18/02/2025
SIGNED OFF BY:	Inês Watson CMLI Specialists Team Leader (Landscape Architect)
DATE:	28/02/2025