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04/09/2024

For the attention of: Jacques Burrowes

Ref: DC/24/1112 - Thistledown Cottage, Harbolets Road, West Chiltington, West Sussex RH20 2LG

Thank you for consulting us on the demolition of existing buildings and erection of 2 x new build dwellings (in the alternative to permission granted under DC/23/1906 Prior Approval of Proposed Change of Use of Agricultural Building to form 2 dwellinghouses).

This letter sets out our consultation response on the landscape impact of the application and how the proposal relates and responds to the landscape setting and context of the site following a desktop review and received site images.

Summary

Not supportive on landscape grounds	
Supportive subject to attached recommendations and / or conditions	X
Further information required prior to determination	
No landscape comments / does not wish to comment	

While we have no major landscape concerns regarding the principle of development, we recommend further information is provided and details secured by condition should the application progress.

Site Context

The site is located approximately 2.7km north of West Chiltington and accessed via Harbolets Road. The site comprises a number of mature trees and outbuildings. The boundaries are defined by a combination of managed hedgerow, hedgerow tree and post and rail fencing.

Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) located in close proximity to the site include Bridleway 2344 less than 100m to the southeast along Harbolets Road and permissive path G Class Highway WEC/G46/2, also less than 100m to the southeast. Footpath 2351 is located approx. 170m to the northwest.

Planning Context

Horsham District Planning Framework

The Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) (HDPF) Proposals Maps identifies the site as being located outside the defined built-up area boundary and therefore designated as countryside.

Policy 25: 'The Natural Environment and Landscape Character' sets out that development proposals will be required to protect, conserve, and enhance the landscape character, taking into account areas identified as being of landscape importance, the individual settlement characteristics, and maintains settlement separation.

Policy 26: Countryside Protection sets out a presumption against development unless for agriculture, forestry minerals, quiet informal recreation or ensures the sustainable development of rural areas. The Policy also states that development permitted must be of a scale appropriate to its countryside character location and must not lead, either individually or cumulatively, to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside and/or conserves, and / or enhances, the key features and characteristics of the landscape character area in which it is located.

Policy 31: 'Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity' states that development should contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity and should also be compliant with Policy 33: Development Principles which states that proposals should be distinctive in character, respect the character of the surrounding area (including its overall setting, views and green corridors) and, where available and applicable, take account of the recommendations/policies of the relevant Design Statements and Character Assessments.

Draft West Chiltington Neighbourhood Plan Reg 19 (2021 to 2031)

Horsham District Council is undertaking a Reg 19 review of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan sets objectives on key identified themes such as housing, getting around, business and tourism, community, leisure, well-being and the environment.

Appendix 6 Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Service of the emerging plan identifies a number of Biodiversity Corridor's concluding that: *The Centre for Biological Diversity1 recommendation is that corridors should be a minimum of 1000 feet (300m) wide*. We therefore identify that the site lies within the corridor and therefore should be mindful of emerging Policy EH1 Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services which states that: *New development within, or immediately adjacent to the Biodiversity Corridors and green infrastructure assets identified on Map C and Appendix 6 will only be supported where it can be clearly demonstrated that development proposals will not give rise to any unacceptable harm to their integrity or function* and that: *Development should not lead to a net loss in biodiversity.*

Para 1.4 states that: Developers are strongly encouraged to also demonstrate how the overall function and integrity of the Biodiversity Corridors may be enhanced to provide a 'net gain'. Proposals should also include a management plan to ensure that effective long-term management and enhancement of key features within the Biodiversity Corridor can be achieved.

Policy EH3 Protection of trees and hedgerows sets out the protection of these natural assets by stating that: *development that damages or results in the loss of trees of arboricultural and amenity value, trees the subject of a TPO or loss of hedgerows and/or priority habitat, or which significantly damages ecological networks will not be supported; unless the need for, and the benefits of the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.*

Review of submitted information

Generally, we have no major landscape concerns with regard the principle of development on this site, but the acceptability of the proposal will be subject to detail regarding any proposed landscaping, surfacing materials and boundary treatment.

Whilst the Design and Access Statement (DAS) suggests that the proposal will include new tree and shrub planting, we would require further detailed information on the proposed landscape scheme including species, quantities and location for the new planting.

The Proposed Block Plan (Dwg. 2404TH_R0_002) shows 3no. trees proposed to be removed to allow for access. However, there is no information provided to assess the condition of the existing trees and how the retained trees will be protected during demolition and construction works.

The proposal includes large areas of hardstanding at either side of the existing access and a new access track to the field to the west. The DAS says that driveways will be gravelled and patios and walkways with permeable paving. Whilst this is appropriate in principle, we would seek the submission of a plan to indicate locations and proposed materials palette.

We have concerns over the potential impact of the new access track to the field to the west on the existing trees. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement will be required to include details of the proposed surfacing material and construction methods.

There is currently vegetation in the form of trees and gappy hedge along the site's eastern boundary to Harbolets Road. The Proposed Block Plan (Dwg. 2404TH_R0_002) indicates that some of the existing vegetation will be removed and a hard fencing proposed instead around existing site entrance. The DAS lists a number of "*advantages to the current proposals"* including "*Visual improvements to the context and proposed street scene*".

Based on the proposed arrangement to the site entrance and eastern boundary as indicated in the Proposed Block Plan (Dwg. 2404TH_R0_002), the proposal fails to demonstrate that the street scene will be improved. Existing planting along Harbolets Road must be improved and strengthened through new planting to filling gaps in the existing hedge and through appropriate management. Any hard fencing fronting Harbolets Road must have planting (fronting onto the road) to enhance visual amenity. We would not be supportive of removal of vegetation along Harbolets Road and any proposed hard fencing should be positioned behind existing vegetation. There are good examples of soft boundary treatment to property entrances along Harbolets further to the south (The Cabin). We would expect the development to adopt a similar approach.

Recommendations

- Further detailed information is required to be submitted prior determination:

    - **An Arboricultural Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement** should be submitted to inform on the impact on existing trees and hedgerows affected by the proposal. This assessment should be undertaken in accordance with BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design demolition and construction recommendations and should provide details on trees and shrubs quality, those to be retained and/or removed, the impact on them and any constraints.

      Detailed soft landscaping plan and hard landscaping plan including boundary treatment. This should include any proposed changes in ground levels and also accurately identify spread, girth and species of all existing trees, shrubs, and hedgerows (retained and removed). A specification of soft landscaping, including proposed trees, planting and seed mixes with details of quantity, species, and size/type (bare root, container etc) must be included. The specification should be in line with British Standards and include details of planting works such as preparation, implementation, materials (i.e. soils and mulch), any protection measures that will be put in place (i.e rabbit guards) and any management regimes (including watering schedules) to support establishment.

- The frontage to Harbolets Road and areas around the site entrance and gates must be improved to assimilate the proposals with the street scene and support the Biodiversity Corridor.

- Any tree loss should be mitigated and new tree planting proposed elsewhere within the site.

Recommended conditions

The following conditions should be apposed to any consent:

ACTION REQUIRED PRIOR TO COMMENCEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT: LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN (LMP)
No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority a landscape management plan for a minimum of 5 years. This should include:

a) Drawing/s showing the extent of the LMP i.e. only showing the areas to which the LMP applies, areas of private ownership should be excluded
b) Written Specification detailing:
   - All operation and procedures for soft landscape areas; inspection, watering, pruning, cutting, mowing, clearance and removal of arisings and litter, removal of temporary items (fencing, guards and stakes) and replacement of failed planting.
   - All operations and procedures for hard landscape areas; inspection, sweeping, clearing of accumulated vegetative material and litter, maintaining edges, and painted or finished surfaces.
   - Furniture (Bins, Benches and Signage) and Play Equipment
   - All operations and procedures for surface water drainage system; inspection of linear drains and swales, removal of unwanted vegetative material and litter.
c) Maintenance task table which explains the maintenance duties across the site in both chronological and systematic order.

Reason - To support plant establishment and ensure appropriate management is carried out and to maintain functionality and visual aesthetic.

Please let us know if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

Laura Cohen BSc (Hons)
Assistant Landscape Consultant

Almudena Quiralte BA (Hons) Dip LA CMLI
Senior Landscape Consultant

Place Services provide landscape advice on behalf of Horsham District Council.
Please note: This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter.