

Inspector Luke Fleming
C/O Kerry Trueman
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22 November 2024

Dear Inspector,

**Hearing Statement on Matter 9, Issue 2 – Other Sites Settlement Allocation
Obo Sandgate Henfield Developments Ltd – Draft Allocation HNF1: Land at Sandgate Nurseries**

Is Strategic Policy HA9: Henfield Allocation sound? a) HNF1?

The allocation of this site is sound.

The allocation of site HNF1 is in accordance with the proposed methodology for site selection. The site is located within Henfield, which is the second settlement type in the hierarchy in Table 3 of the submission plan (Towns and Larger Villages). Towns and larger villages are defined as having, ‘...a good range of services and facilities, strong community networks and local employment provision, together with reasonable rail and/or bus services.’ The site is located within a few minutes’ walk of existing bus services.

The development of this site will have limited impact on the wider landscape. It is an infill site, on the site of a former nursery. There is a recent housing development to the north, rears of residential properties to the east and commercial uses to the south. It is enclosed by retained trees to the west and the northern portion of the site fronting West End Lane, will be provided as meadow with native shrubs and tree planting to provide an attractive landscaped entrance to Henfield, a biodiverse habitat and maintain the setting of the neighbouring listed building. It will therefore meet the objective of preserving the unique landscape character of the borough and minimising the impact on the countryside.

The site is in single ownership and available for housing development now. This is evidenced by the continued promotion of the site through the local plan process and the current outline planning application for up to 82 new homes consisting of 72 age restricted retirement homes and 10 starter homes (Ref: DC/23/0189) which is at an advanced stage. The applicant has worked closely with officers during the consideration of the application. Water neutrality is the final matter to be resolved, and a site-specific solution is currently under consideration by Natural England.

The application has been supported by technical reports that have been reviewed by the relevant consultees and demonstrate that the site is achievable. The following matters are understood to be agreed between the applicant and officers at the time of this submission:



- Highways – No objections. The development will introduce traffic calming measures and will extend the pedestrian footway. A successful Road Safety Audit has been completed.
- Landscape – The principle of the development is accepted.
- West Sussex County Council Local Lead Flood Authority – No objections subject to conditions.
- Environment Agency – No objections subject to conditions.
- Environmental Health – All matters resolved aside from water neutrality which is under consideration.
- Heritage – impact on the wider setting of Grade II Listed Dears Farmhouse is less than substantial harm at the lowest end of that scale. The public benefit associated with provision of 82 homes is considered to significantly outweigh this low level of harm in accordance with paragraph 208 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- Ecology – Recommendation to grant subject to conditions
- Nature Space – No objection subject to reasonable Avoidance Measures to minimise the risk of impact on great crested newts
- Trees – No objections. A request for further information regarding proposed services in relation to the root protection area of an of site veteran tree has been responded with services now shown outside the RPA. It is understood that this final matter on trees is now resolved.
- Fire & Rescue – No objection has been raised subject to conditions

As set out above, the outstanding technical matter is water neutrality. However, the site-specific solution is at an advanced stage of preparation. Deep borehole testing has been undertaken and this demonstrates that the site can be served from a private water supply within the site, which has zero impact on the River Arun. This is currently under consideration by Natural England.

The site is suitable, available and achievable for housing and can be delivered early in the plan period.

Whilst the allocation is considered to be sound, the indicative housing numbers do not reflect the full capacity of the site. The current application demonstrates that the site has capacity for an increased number of homes whilst meeting technical requirements.

Given the constraints of the borough and the stepped trajectory which is necessary due to the number of houses reliant on delivery of larger allocations, it is even more important that effective use is made of other allocated sites. In particular, those that are unconstrained, that can come forwards earlier in the plan period and which will not be held up if there are any delays to the Sussex North Offsetting Water Scheme due to having a bespoke, site -specific solution to water neutrality.



Whilst it is noted that the allocation is for *'at least'* 55 homes, it is respectfully requested that the housing number is amended to *'approximately 80 homes'* which is in line with the current outline application and underlines the importance of making effective use of this site.

Yours sincerely,



Rosalind Gall MA MRTPI
Director

