

**Minutes of a meeting of District Planning Committee
held on Thursday, 1st June, 2023
from 2.00 pm**

Present: D Sweatman (Chairman)
A Peacock (Vice-Chair)

M Avery	A Eves	C Wood
R Bates	E Prescott	
K Berggreen	R Whittaker	

Absent: Councillors C Phillips, R Jackson and M Kennedy

Also Present: Councillors J Edwards

Cllr Sweatman advised he would act as Chairman in absence of Cllr Phillips and sought the Committees agreement for Cllr Peacock to act as the Vice-Chairman.

1. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies were received from Councillors Jackson, Kennedy and Phillips.

2. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF ANY MATTER ON THE AGENDA.

No declarations were received.

3. TO BE AGREED BY GENERAL AFFIRMATION THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 16 MARCH 2023.

The minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 16 Marsh 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN AGREES TO TAKE AS URGENT BUSINESS.

The Chairman confirmed he had no urgent business.

5. DM22/2832 - WEALDEN HOUSE, LEWES ROAD, ASHURST WOOD, WEST SUSSEX, RH19 3TB.

Steven King, Planning Applications Team Leader highlighted the agenda update sheet. He confirmed an additional email had been received from Cllr John Belsey, Ward Member to the Members of the District Planning Committee, who welcomed the proposal. He introduced the application which sought the demolition of existing buildings and erection of residential redevelopment scheme comprising 2 x three storey buildings containing 15 apartments together with 35 x three and four bedroom houses, 105 car and garage spaces, associated landscaping and open space. He confirmed the land had been allocated for development in the Ashurst Wood

Neighbourhood Plan, and the land is within the AONB. He highlighted the heritage asset to the east of the site and noted the extant Planning Permission from 2020 for 54 dwellings for the EDF site only, which can still be implemented until November 2023.

The Planning Applications Team Leader set out that the application should be determined in accordance with the Development plan unless material planning considerations indicated otherwise. He outlined that the development plan comprised the District Plan, Ashurst Wood Neighbourhood Plan and Sites Allocation Development Plan Document. He outlined that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was a material planning consideration that should be given significant weight. The principle of development has been established as the site has been allocated for development in the Neighbourhood Plan and planning permission has been approved for part of the site. The legal agreement will have a viability review clause providing an opportunity to review the scheme at a later date and receive potentially contributions for affordable housing if the scheme generated more income that was initially thought. The Team Leader summarised the main issues to assess with reference to the report before the Committee. On transport matters he summarised stating that Highways were content, the Planning Inspector had accepted 54 dwellings so there were no grounds to object on highways safety issues.

Members discussed the provision of parking and EVCs. They expressed concern with the lack of affordable housing on the site, the timing of the habitat assessment and sustainable transport.

In response to Members' questions the Planning Team Leader confirmed: the infrastructure payments for SAMM and SANG were set out in the Committee report; the Parish Council had objected to the 2020 application for the EDF site, but they are content with the new application for the whole site which has a better housing mix. He advised the Committee that the applicant, as part of the Section 106 agreement is required to submit a travel plan which should be designed to encourage sustainable transport; this will be monitored by WSCC. He noted that an independent consultant has confirmed the site is not currently viable if 30 % affordable housing is provided. The 15ms buffer zone around the Ancient Woodland currently includes the existing car park. The application would improve this position as the proposal would not have any development within the 15m buffer zone. the houses will have ECVs as part of the building regulations and the Committee could request an additional condition to require ECVs for the flats' parking spaces.

The Chairman reminded the Members that they must consider the application that has been submitted for approval. He noted the application was an improvement of the approved 2020 application and the demolition of the EDF building made the scheme less viable.

A Member noted this is a brown field site, the Urban Designer had raised objections to the design, but the design now conforms with the Mid Sussex Design Guide and provides a good contribution to the housing requirement for the District.

The Chairman asked if the Committee required an additional condition to provide ECVs for the parking spaces, the Committee agreed.

The Chairman noted that no further Members wished to speak so moved to the recommendations to approve the application with amended conditions, the application was approved with 8 votes for and 1 vote against.

RESOLVED

Recommendation A

3.1 It is recommended that planning permission is approved subject to the conditions listed in Appendix A and the completion of a section 106 legal agreement to secure the required SAMM and SANG mitigation, infrastructure contributions, a Viability Review mechanism in relation affordable housing, a Travel Plan and the required off site highway works.

Recommendation B

3.2 If a satisfactory planning obligation has not been completed by 1st September 2023 it is recommended that the application be refused at the discretion of the Assistant Director for Planning and Sustainable Economy for the following reasons:

1. The proposal fails to provide the required infrastructure contributions or an appropriate review mechanism in relation to affordable housing provision. The application therefore conflicts with policies DP20 and DP31 in the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031.
2. The application fails to mitigate its impact on the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC, contrary to policy DP17 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 and the provisions contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.
3. The application does not provide the required off site Highways Works and a Travel plan to secure more sustainable forms of Transport has not been secured. The application therefore conflicts with policy DP21 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031.

6. DM/22/1774 - HAVELOCK FARM, WAKEHURST PLACE, SELSFIELD ROAD, ARDINGLY, HAYWARDS HEATH, RH17 6TN.

Stuart Malcolm, Senior Planning Officer for Development Management drew the Members' attention to the update sheet. It detailed correspondence from Cllr Marsh, Ward Member, and he objected to the application. The National Botanical Gardens of Georgia (country) and the National Autonomous University of Mexico, who work with Kew as part of their research and development, supported the application. He also noted the minor changes to conditions, highlighting conditions six to eight. The Senior Planning Officer introduced the application which sought the demolition of existing agricultural buildings (with those of heritage value to be retained), formerly known as Havelock Farm, and the development of a new conservation and research nursery consisting of four glasshouses of varying size, polytunnels, shade structures, standout area, mechanical plant building, and associated hard and soft landscape works.

He highlighted that the site is within the defined countryside and High Weald Area Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), confirmed a public Right of Way, and noted key heritage assets. Havelock Farm used to be a working farm with old agricultural buildings but is now used by the Wakehurst estate for storage and maintenance associated with the estate management that includes the keeping of agricultural type vehicles. The application would create new conservation and research nurseries as the applicant advises the existing building is no longer fit for purpose and would enable them to continue their work. The new build would provide an additional 1700 sq ms of floor space and would retain some buildings which are heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets. There would be less than substantial harm to the heritage and non-designated heritage assets, and this should be given considerable importance and weight in the decision-making process to conform with the NPPF. He highlighted the conditions and in summary stated it was in the national interest to

approve the application and the public benefits outweigh the less than substantial harm.

James Holt, on behalf of Carole Williams spoke in objection to the application.

Penny Ball, spoke in objection to the application.

Glen Adams, spoke in objection to the application.

Harriet Jenkins, Applicant spoke in support of the application.

Ed Ikin, Director of Wakehurst spoke in support of the application.

The Chairman noted the important work carried out by Kew Gardens, the report noted why the scheme could not be located elsewhere, and the Committee must consider the application before it.

Members discussed the scheme in relation to the topography of the site, the proposed location of the scheme and expressed concern over the lighting of the glasshouses.

In response to Members' questions the Senior Planning Officer noted the applicant's submissions critiques three alternative sites, confirmed the site was sloped and the land would be lowered so the buildings would be cut into the land to reduce their overall bulk. He highlighted conditions set out in the Appendix to agree the levels and levels of lighting to ensure a minimal impact on neighbouring properties, local biodiversity, and the dark skies of the AONB. He advised the information to be provided by the applicant on lighting levels will be robustly considered by experts.

The Chairman acknowledged the concerns of local residents, but reiterated that the public benefits outweighed the less than substantial harm

A Member reminded the Committee that the High Weald AONB supported the application from this World leading facility, noted that additional screening would be planted; and the scheme would bring investment to the District.

The Chairman noted that no further Members wished to speak so moved to the recommendation, the application was approved with 7 votes in favour, 1 vote against and 1 abstention.

RESOLVED

Recommendation A

It is recommended that planning permission is approved subject to the conditions listed in Appendix A

7. QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.2 DUE NOTICE OF WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN.

The Chairman confirmed that no questions had been received.

The meeting finished at 3.27 pm

Chairman