

Report to	Planning Committee
Date	14 February 2019
By	Director of Planning
Local Authority	East Hampshire District Council
Application Number	SDNP/18/05145/FUL
Applicant	Ms Christine Seaward
Application	Two-storey extension to western elevation and recladding of existing main building, including creation of first floor external deck with canopy, and recladding of existing gatehouse. Reconfiguration of car park and associated landscaping.
Address	The Sustainability Centre, Mercury Park, Droxford Road, East Meon, Petersfield, Hampshire, GU32 1HR

Recommendation: That planning permission be granted, subject to the conditions set out in Section 10 of this report.

Executive Summary

The Sustainability Centre is a well-established site, which operates under Use Class D1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended). Whilst other uses take place on the site, such as the natural burial ground and café, these uses are ancillary to the main use as a learning and education centre. The proposed works to retrofit and extend the main building, employing Passivhaus methods, would provide enhanced facilities, using locally sourced materials including timber from within the wider Sustainability Centre site. The application also proposes wider hard and soft landscaping works to better integrate the buildings into the landscape and would help express the activities and objectives of the Sustainability Centre from its entrance.

It is considered that the proposal would have a positive impact on the character of the local area; it would conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park, and promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park. Whilst it is noted there have been objections from third parties concerned about adverse effects associated with the use of the site, officers do not consider that this application (which proposes no change of use and a relatively modest extension to the main building), would have such a harmful impact on the amenity of local residents as to withhold planning permission. On this basis, the application is recommended for approval.

The application is placed before Committee due to the volume of representations received.

I Site Description

- I.1 The Sustainability Centre is an independent learning and study centre for sustainability (Use Class D1) and a social enterprise charity, which occupies the former HMS Mercury site, to

the southwest of East Meon. The Centre is within a rural location, with the overall site comprising 22ha of woodland and natural chalk downland.

- 1.2 The evolution of the site, from forming part of a larger estate with aspirations of providing a parkland / woodland setting, through to its use associated with the Royal Navy, and to its current activity, is still evident. There remains several twentieth century institutional style buildings, of little historic or architectural merit, large areas of hardstanding – particularly close to the main access, and significant swathes of mature trees, which are atypical in the wider ‘Open Downland’ character area, of which the site is part of. The site therefore exhibits a unique sense of place and identity.
- 1.3 The application site itself comprises only a portion of the overall site, including the flat-roofed 2-storey main building set back from the highway on the eastern boundary, the car park and landscaped areas to the north of the main building and adjacent to the highway, and the gatehouse located at the entrance to the site, adjacent to the Droxford Road. The main building is built into the slope of the site, presenting itself as a single storey building from the north (front) and as a true 2-storey building from the south (rear). The main building currently accommodates offices for the administration team, education team, outdoor learning, staff and volunteers, tenant partners, as well as providing the main focus for visitors, café, teaching spaces and a community / conference / meeting space. The gatehouse is a single-storey flat-roofed building.
- 1.4 Whilst located in the Rural Area (i.e. outside of any settlement boundary), there is a residential estate to the east of the site, comprising large, typically detached 2-storey dwellings, which was granted permission at the same time as the creation of the Sustainability Centre. Further housing, again large 2-storey dwellings, are located to the northeast, on the opposite side of the highway. The South Downs Way runs along the northern boundary of the site. Part of the wider site, to the south of this application site, is designated as a ‘Site of Nature Conservation Interest’ (SNCI) on account of the grassland present.

2 Relevant Planning History

- 2.1 The following applications have been considered and approved by the SDNPA:
 - SDNP/16/01004/FUL - Retention of campsite and structures. 05.05.2016
 - SDNP/16/01003/FUL - Retention of three residential yurts. 05.05.2016
 - SDNP/16/00361/PRE – Pre-application advice provided for a camp site. 15.02.2016
 - SDNP/15/04610/FUL - Single storey detached classroom. 07.12.2015
 - SDNP/13/00738/FUL - Retention of three residential yurts. 05.04.2013
- 2.2 The following applications were considered prior to the designation of the SDNP and are relevant to the consideration of this application:
 - 21514/084 – Outbuildings for Sustainability Centre. Approved 08.03.2010
 - 21514/083 – Open-sided woodland shelter for use as a classroom. Approved 05.01.2010
 - 21514/080 – Change of use of land to extension to natural burial site. Approved 16.08.2007
 - 21514/077 – Use of land as burial site. Approved 05.10.2005
 - 21514/059 – Change of use of land to burial site. Approved 16.11.1999
 - 21514/052 – Erection of Eco-Classroom. Approved 03.03.1999
 - 21514/031 – Extensions, alterations and associated works in connection with the site’s use as a Sustainability Centre. Approved 15.05.1997
- 2.3 Turning to the current application, pre-application discussions have been held with officers (SDNP/17/05495/PRE), including consideration by the Design Review Panel in 2017. The main points for further consideration raised were:
 - The requirement for a stronger vision for the whole site coming out through the landscape strategy. This would then enable the production of a more convincing, strategic Masterplan for the site, and in turn, better inform the development of the plans to renovate the main building.

- Any future application for the works to the main building would also need to include the site entrance and parking area. These two aspects of the site are too closely linked to be viewed in isolation and to do so could impede the best and most efficient use of land / approach to development.

Following this initial feedback, the applicant sought to address these points and engaged again with the SDNPA in pre-application discussions to demonstrate how these matters had been resolved.

3 Proposal

3.1 There are three main aspects to the proposal:

- Extension and renovation of the main building;
- Reconfiguration of the existing car park and area north of the main building to provide improved car parking facilities and clearer routes for visitors to the building, and
- Renovation of gatehouse.

3.2 The aim of the extension and renovation of the main building is to provide an improved layout, distribution and design, giving better facilities for the existing functions operating in the building and to do so in a manner befitting the overall ethos of the Sustainability Centre. This would include the provision of improved public facilities, exhibition space, additional classroom and teaching spaces and a dedicated under 18's suite as well as improved disabled access. In order to facilitate this, it is proposed to construct a 2-storey extension at the western end of the main building – built into the slope to match the existing. The renovation and extension has incorporated measures to significantly enhance the environmental impact of the existing building by reducing heat loss and improving the building's carbon footprint and on-site energy generation.

3.3 The proposed extension would house a classroom and covered deck at upper-ground floor level with the main public entrance, lobby, and shop and exhibition space below. Both floors of the existing building would be reconfigured including the relocation of the café, offices and conference/community space. A deep canopy would be provided over the extension and reaching around the southern elevation. Overall, the extension would provide an additional 154sqm of floorspace. Further landscaping works are proposed immediately around the main building, including the provision of a hard landscaped terrace that would be used in association with the building and existing café facilities.

3.4 The current northern entrance at upper-ground level would become a secondary entrance for staff and deliveries only. Photovoltaics would be redeployed on to the roof and the natural light currently provided from roof lights would be consolidated into a single clerestory structure. The introduction of this, and the provision of the canopy parapet would result in an increase in height above the existing flat roof of 3.95m. The entire building is proposed to be clad in timber sourced primarily from the wider Sustainability Centre site, with the overall appearance of the building aiming to reflect the character and appearance of the Woodland Hall, located elsewhere on the site.

3.5 In terms of the car park and routes to the main building, it is proposed to provide a better setting for the buildings and enhance the visitor experience from the outset, as well as improving the relationship between the site boundary and the South Downs Way. It is proposed to enclose the space to the northwest of the gatehouse using planting, formation of a natural bank and a small area of gabion wall; the creation of an NMU path adjacent to the existing vehicular access, running directly to the main building; more efficient use of the existing car parking areas to provide a total of 83 car parking spaces (including an additional 6 disabled spaces, bringing the total disabled bays to 9) and 2 coach parking spaces (the site currently accommodates 80 car parking spaces, 3 disabled bays and 1 coach parking space); slight redirection of the vehicular access within the site to direct visitors to the western car park, and the installation of gates across the entrance to manage the use of the car parking areas. These works would be supported by improved pedestrian routes into the site, additional tree planting (focussed broadly around the main building), native whip planting to

the south of the car park and an area of chalk downland restoration adjacent to the South Downs Way.

- 3.6 The proposal also includes the renovation of the gatehouse, including recladding in the same design and materials as the main building. It is intended that this building would serve a dual purpose; providing a gateway for passing visitors using the South Downs Way to gain further knowledge of what the Sustainability Centre offers, as well as potential interpretation space, and providing a space for those visiting the site for a burial to congregate with more discretion.

4 Consultations

- 4.1 **Drainage** - No objection subject to conditions.

4.2 Environmental Health

- **Noise control** – No objection subject to conditions including seeking further information on the Use Class and how the applicant will prevent noise emanating from the site, and
- **Contaminated Land** - No objection subject to conditions.

- 4.3 **Local Highway Authority** - No objection subject to conditions. In terms of access and internal layout, there is an existing access via Droxford Road. From reviewing the highway boundary in this location adequate visibility is achievable within the highway verge that can be maintained by the highway authority. There is adequate space within the site to turn vehicles on-site (inclusive of refuse vehicles) which will enable serving and forward gear access and egress to take place. The enhanced access road will segregate vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists more clearly.

In terms of parking, whilst a full assessment has not been carried out, it is noted that the proposed 83 car parking spaces (including 9 disabled bays) and 13 cycle spaces appear to meet the required parking standards.

In terms of trip generation, the Highway Authority is satisfied that the potential traffic generation from the proposed development would not have a severe detrimental impact on the operation and safety of the local highway network.

- 4.4 **Ecology Officer** - Further information required regarding bats and ground nesting birds (received and further comments awaited).

- 4.5 **Landscape Officer** - No objection subject to conditions. Overall, this scheme is supporting local landscape character and wider National Park Purposes and Duty, particularly but not only through the proposals put forward for sourcing materials for the Sustainability Centre.

- 4.6 **Design Officer** – Support, this is a very positive refurbishment and extension with good sustainability credentials. This is a proposal with a contemporary design using organic shapes and with timber cladding. The quality of this building design is of an appropriate high standard for what should read as a building of high sustainable excellence and as a learning institution with a visitor centre function. The overall development design has improved markedly following officer and DRP interventions.

- 4.7 **Arboricultural Officer** - No objection subject to conditions.

- 4.8 **Parish Council** - No objection.

5 Representations

- 5.1 At the time of writing the report, 19 representations objecting to the proposal and 41 representations supporting have been received. A summary of the representations are set out below:

Summary of objections

- Noise concerns over increased functions taking place within the building and on the wider site.

- Concern regarding outdoor space adjacent to the cafe being used as a commercial entertainment or events venue.
- Noise impact, overlooking and loss of privacy from the open air balcony.
- Concern over noise and nuisance generation from the car park at night.
- Acoustic fencing should be considered.
- Increased light pollution.
- Improvements to the site will increase attendance and therefore increase the volume of traffic on local roads (there is no public transport so people will have to arrive by car or coach). Will lead to more traffic congestion and road safety concerns.
- Change of use to D2 is unacceptable.

Summary of support

- Improved facilities will lead to increased opportunity for learning, and engaging all ages in subjects such as the environment, climate change, responsibility, eco-change, in ways that link with craft, art, and well-being.
- Allows the organisation to actively demonstrate good practice in sustainability by reusing the existing building and using local and natural materials.
- It will provide a much needed, outstanding and unique resource which will contribute to improving the lives of those who live in, work in and visit the SDNP.
- Proposed design pushes the boundaries of eco design beyond the norm and sympathetically integrates with the local landscape.

5.2 **Planning Officer Comment:** The applicant has submitted a revised planning application form correcting a factual error and confirming the existing and proposed use would fall within Use Class D1. This application is not seeking permission for a change of use to Use Class D2.

6 Planning Policy Context

6.1 Applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The statutory development plan in this area comprises the adopted policies of the **East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy 2014**, and **East Meon Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016-2032**, and the saved policies of the **East Hampshire District Local Plan: 2nd Revision 2006**. The development plan policies and other material considerations considered relevant to this application are set out in section 7, below.

National Park Purposes

6.2 The two statutory purposes of the SDNP designation are:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage,
- To promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of their areas.

If there is a conflict between these two purposes, conservation takes precedence. There is also a duty to foster the economic and social wellbeing of the local community in pursuit of these purposes.

7 Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Circular 2010

7.1 Government policy relating to National Parks is set out in English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010 (DEFRA Circular) and The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was issued and came into effect on 24 July 2018. The DEFRA Circular and NPPF confirm that National Parks have the highest status of protection and the NPPF states at paragraph 172 that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in the National Parks and that the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations and should also be given great weight in National Parks.

- 7.2 The NPPF has been considered holistically in the determination of this application, although it is considered that the following sections are of particular relevance:
- Section 2: Achieving Sustainable Development
 - Section 4: Decision-making
 - Section 6: Building a strong, competitive economy
 - Section 8: Promoting healthy and safe communities
 - Section 9: Promoting sustainable transport
 - Section 12: Achieving well-designed places
 - Section 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
 - Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

- 7.3 The following Development Plan policies set out below, have been assessed for their compliance with the NPPF and are considered to be compliant with the NPPF.

Development Plan Policies

- 7.4 The following policies in the adopted **East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy 2014** (JCS 2014) are relevant to this application:

- CP1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CP2 – Spatial Strategy
- CP6 – Rural Economy and Enterprise
- CP9 – Tourism
- CP19 – Development in the Countryside
- CP20 – Landscape
- CP21 – Biodiversity
- CP24 – Sustainable Construction
- CP25 – Flood Risk
- CP26 – Water Resources/Quality
- CP27 – Pollution
- CP28 – Green Infrastructure
- CP29 – Design
- CP31 – Transport

- 7.5 The following saved policy of the **East Hampshire District Local Plan: 2nd Revision 2006** (Local Plan 2006) is relevant to this application:

- HE2 – Alterations and Extensions to Buildings

- 7.6 The following policies in the adopted **East Meon Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016-2032** (EMNDP) are considered relevant to this application:

- EM7 – Building Material and Detailing
- EM9 – Extensions and Alterations
- EM13 – Surface Water Management

- 7.7 The Pre-Submission version of the **South Downs Local Plan** (South Downs Local Plan) was published under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 for public consultation between 26th September to 21st November 2017, and the responses considered by the Authority. The Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in April 2018. The Submission version of the Local Plan consists of the Pre-Submission Plan and the Schedule of Proposed Changes. It is a material consideration in the assessment of this planning application in accordance with paragraph 48 of the NPPF, which confirms that weight may be given to policies in emerging plans following publication. The Local Plan process is in its final stage before adoption with consultation on relatively minor Main Modifications started on 1st February 2019. Based on the very advanced stage of the examination the draft policies of the South Downs Local Plan can be afforded almost full weight.

7.8 The following policies of the South Downs Local Plan are considered relevant to this application:

- SD1 – Sustainable Development
- SD2 – Ecosystem Services
- SD4 – Landscape Character
- SD5 – Design
- SD8 – Dark Night Skies
- SD9 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- SD17 – Protection of the Water Environment
- SD19 – Transport and Accessibility
- SD20 – Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Routes
- SD21 – Public Realm, Highway Design and Public Art
- SD22 – Parking Provision
- SD23 – Sustainable Tourism
- SD34 – Sustaining the Local Economy
- SD45 – Green Infrastructure
- SD48 – Climate Change and Sustainable Use of Resources
- SD49 – Flood Risk Management
- SD50 – Sustainable Drainage Systems
- SD51 – Renewable Energy
- SD54 – Pollution and Air Quality
- SD55 – Contaminated Land

South Downs Partnership Management Plan

7.9 The South Downs Partnership Management Plan (SDPMP) was adopted on 3 December 2013. It sets out a vision and long term outcomes for the National Park, as well as 5 year policies and a continually updated Delivery Framework. The SDPMP is a material consideration in planning applications and has some weight pending adoption of the SDNP Local Plan.

7.10 The following policies are considered to be of particular relevance to this application:

- General Policy 1 – conserve and enhance the natural beauty and special qualities of the landscape
- General Policy 3 – protect and enhance tranquillity and dark night skies
- General Policy 4 – create more, bigger, better-managed and connected areas of habitat
- Forestry and Woodland Sector Policy 20 – raise awareness of the inherent values of well-managed woodlands
- General Policy 28 – improve and maintain rights of way and access land
- General Policy 29 – enhance the health and well-being of residents and visitors by supporting the use of the National Park as a place for healthy outdoor activity and relaxation
- General Policy 31 – raise awareness and understanding of National Park, that inspire and celebrate strong sense of place
- General Policy 32 – encourage and support creative and cultural activities
- Transport Policy 39 – manage vehicle parking
- Visitor and Tourism Policy 41 – maintain visitor enjoyment and influence visitor behaviour
- Visitor and Tourism Policy 43 – support the development and maintenance of appropriate recreation, tourism and visitor hubs
- Education and Learning Policy 45 – develop high-quality learning experiences
- General Policy 55 – promote opportunities for diversified economic activity
- General Policy 56 – support appropriate renewable energy schemes

7.11 The outcomes of the SDPMP are also a material consideration. Relevant outcomes include 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 10.

8 Planning Assessment

8.1 The ethos and aspirations of the Sustainability Centre are, at their core, highly representative of the Purposes and Duty of the National Park. The proposed development aims to enhance the relationship between the site and the landscape, and improve education and visitor facilities. The proposal would both conserve and enhance natural beauty, cultural heritage and wildlife as required by Purpose 1, and promote understanding and enjoyment of the National Park and is therefore in accordance with Purpose 2. The proposed development seeks to rationalise and make better use of existing space and construct a relatively modest extension, in order to support the existing, lawful use of the buildings and wider site: there are no new uses proposed in association with the application. On this basis, the main issues for consideration with regard to this application are:

- Impact on landscape character and visual impact (including dark night skies);
- Design (including materials, climate change and sustainability);
- Impact on amenity of local residents;
- Impact on ecology, and
- Highways and parking.

Landscape Character and Visual Impact

- 8.2 The existing main building and gatehouse have a physically awkward relationship with the site, given their historical military function, which reinforces the buildings' isolation from the surrounding landscaped area. The vast expanse of hardstanding, with relatively little screening or existing intervention to break up the mass of tarmac, is further considered to have an adverse impact on the landscape character and when viewing the site, both from within the Centre and from the South Downs Way.
- 8.3 The main building is partially visible from vantage points to the north and reinforces the former institutional use of the site. The scheme presents an opportunity to present something better informed by the landscape.
- 8.4 The overall landscaping strategy embraces the unusual character of the site, and reinforces the presence of the site within the wider landscape. This is achieved through the introduction of the chalk downland to the north of the car park, the renovation of the gatehouse and by the low-level planting proposed to break up the appearance of the car park itself. The conviction of this strategy, which may not be entirely typical of the 'Open Downland' character, is considered to be successful in this instance, given the previous interventions on the site. In response to the pre-application advice and DRP comments, the proposals as submitted are considered to have resulted in a more confident and robust landscape approach and overall significant improvements to the site.
- 8.5 It is considered that the main building, despite its increased size, remains well connected to the setting through the choice of materials, remaining responsive to the topography of the site and as a result of the additional planting around the building to help frame the building in public views. It is important the building remains visible given its use and it is considered that the proposed changes significantly improve the overall visual impact of the building itself from public vantage points, particularly the South Downs Way.
- 8.6 The site is within the core of the South Downs International Dark Sky Reserve. The main building and car park area are both currently lit externally, and the applicant's lighting assessment highlights opportunities for improving the existing impact of light pollution on the Reserve. All lighting on the building would be located under the canopy and directed down. Low profile bollards with emergency capability are proposed only to support accessibility between the disabled parking area and main building. There would be no additional lighting within the car park area. Internally, lighting would be directed downwards and the impact of potential light glow would be further tempered by the introduction of the external canopy. There would be no increase in rooflights in the main building, 12 of the existing 13 rooflights would be replaced with the proposed clerestory (with south facing windows) and a light well to one of the upper floor classroom. Overall, it is considered that the scheme represents an enhancement to the quality of the Dark Sky Reserve. Therefore, it is considered that in

terms of landscape character, visual impact and the quality of dark skies, this proposal is in accordance with relevant policies in the NPPF, JCS 2014, Local Plan 2006, EMNDP, the South Downs Local Plan and the SDNPMP.

Design

- 8.7 The overall aesthetic of the renovated main building and extension, as well as the gatehouse, has evolved alongside the development of the landscape strategy and is considered would significantly enhance the external appearance of the existing buildings. The development of the proposals have been guided through consideration at the Design Review Panel and through pre-application engagement with officers.
- 8.8 The applicant proposes to use timber sourced primarily from within the wider application site, or from other local sources if required. Specifically, they have earmarked Lawson Cypress within the site and identified a source of Western Red Cedar locally, which would be used to construct the extension and clad the existing buildings. These are techniques and species that have been previously successfully employed on the Woodland Hall elsewhere at the Centre. Earth, chalk and pumice have also been identified on site, for use in constructing the extension and the landscaping works. The desire to use local materials is reflective of the overall ambitions of the Sustainability Centre and supported by both saved and emerging development plan policies.
- 8.9 The Sustainability Centre aims to deliver an exemplar in sustainable refurbishment, substantially upgrading the energy performance of the existing building and providing an extension that demonstrates low embodied carbon construction techniques. Following a review of design standards, the applicant has selected Passivhaus as their target with the building fabric and using Passivhaus EnerPHit design principles to reduce energy demand to a minimum. Again, this is considered to be supported by both saved and emerging development plan policies.
- 8.10 It is considered that the design of the extension and other improvements to the main building and gatehouse in terms of their scale, form and external appearance are appropriate to the context and setting of the site, would provide a high quality external appearance to the buildings and overall would contribute to a sense of place. It is considered that this proposal would result in a significant positive enhancement to the external appearance of the buildings and wider landscape setting. Therefore, it is considered that in design and sustainable construction terms the proposal is in accordance with relevant policies in the NPPF, JCS 2014, Local Plan 2006, EMNDP, the South Downs Local Plan and the SDNPMP.

Impact on amenity of local residents

- 8.11 As set out in some of the third party representations, concerns have been raised about the impact of the proposal on the tranquillity of this more rural location in terms of noise and disturbance from people using the site (namely the main building and its external spaces), and loss of privacy and overlooking from the proposed covered deck at first floor level.
- 8.12 In respect of noise and disturbance there are two elements to the assessment of the potential impacts to local residents, the construction phase and the completed scheme.
- 8.13 Dealing with the construction phase first, it is recognised that local residents living adjacent to the site may experience general noise and disturbance associated with such construction works. Local Planning Authorities cannot, as a matter of general principle, prevent construction works occurring. However, the impacts of construction would be relatively short in duration and would be mitigated by the proposed use of planning conditions restricting the hours of working during construction and requiring the submission and approval of a construction environmental management plan (prior to construction works commencing). It is considered reasonable and necessary to attach such conditions to any permission.
- 8.14 For the completed scheme, as with the existing configuration of the site, it is recognised that local residents may, at times, experience some noise associated with use of the site, particularly when external spaces are being used. The Environmental Health Officer has recommended a condition seeking details of how the applicant would control noise

emanating from the site given the potential change of use of the site. As stated previously, the applicant is not seeking a 'change of use' of the buildings or site; use of the buildings and site would remain within Use Class D1 and this is a use that is capable of co-existing with residential uses. Indeed the Sustainability Centre was brought into use at the same time as the neighbouring residential properties were constructed. It is considered imposing a planning condition as suggested by the Environmental Health Officer or preventing the overall general use of the main building or external areas would be unreasonable and would not meet the required tests for imposing planning conditions.

- 8.15 This application is for the relatively modest extension to, and remodelling of, the existing building and does not increase the capacity of the existing building significantly nor does it change the building's lawful use. Whilst the improvements to the outside areas, namely the improved landscape setting around the building and external paved 'terrace' area, are likely to attract visitors as it would be offering an improved landscape setting, these areas, and in particular the outdoor seating area adjacent to the existing café use, are not introducing a 'new use'. The ability to use these areas, adjacent to the gardens of neighbouring residential properties (and approximately 40m from the nearest residential window), for outdoor seating already exists and the café (and outdoor space) is a legitimate ancillary use to the use of the Centre as a whole.
- 8.16 Some of the third party representations have also made reference to the fact that the applicant holds private events. The use for occasional private events would be ancillary to the building's lawful D1 use. The use of the Centre for private functions (including the supply of alcohol, the provision of entertainment, such as playing of music, and the provision of late night refreshments) would fall within the consideration of the licensing regime, nevertheless it is considered that the imposition of a condition restricting the use of loudspeakers or amplified music outside at any time would be reasonable and necessary to protect the amenity of local residents and the tranquillity of the wider area.
- 8.17 There is one element of the extension to the building, the introduction of a new first floor covered deck, which could give rise to impacts on local amenity given its elevated position and slight projection (approximately 2m) from the rear elevation of the building. However, through the design of the building the applicant has sought to minimise any impacts by locating the covered deck area at the western end of the building (away from the boundary with neighbouring residential dwellings), its orientation (facing directly south across the site) and providing a roof covering.
- 8.18 It is considered that these design elements together with the existing mature landscaping on the boundary with the immediate neighbouring dwellings, which would be supplemented with additional planting as shown on the submitted landscaping plans, would result in very limited impacts in terms of overlooking and noise and disturbance. However, it is considered reasonable and necessary to mitigate any potential noise and disturbance by imposing a condition restricting the hours of use of the covered deck area.
- 8.19 As also highlighted in the comments from the Environmental Health Officers, there is also a recognition of the potential impacts associated with the use of the proposed commercial kitchen, other ventilation / plant proposed to be installed and contaminated land, and they recommend a number of conditions relating to the final details of the plant equipment and further detailed survey work (in line with the precautionary approach of dealing with these types of issues).
- 8.20 Taking all matters into consideration, officers do not consider that the public interest would be affected to such an extent as to justify the refusal of planning permission on the grounds of noise and disturbance and that the proposal is in accordance with relevant policies in the NPPF, JCS 2014, the South Downs Local Plan and the SDNPMP.

Ecology

- 8.21 It is considered that the proposed scheme would not have a detrimental impact on the SNCI located elsewhere on the site. The application does include a number of enhancements, including the provision of chalk grassland, which are considered would help improve biodiversity on the site and conserve and enhance wildlife.

8.22 Further information was requested by the SDNPA Ecologist, to demonstrate there would be no adverse impact on protected species (in particular bats and nesting birds), which has subsequently been provided (report from Calyx dated December 2018). This report concluded that no further surveys or precautions were required, providing work is carried out in accordance with the submitted plans and within the specified time periods.

8.23 It is considered that the scheme would conserve and enhance ecology and would not have any detrimental impact on protected species, and therefore is in accordance with the relevant policies in the NPPF, JCS 2014, the South Downs Local Plan and the SDNPMP.

Highways and Parking

8.24 The proposals maintain the existing vehicular access from Droxford Road and there are no changes proposed to the vehicular access arrangements, other than the installation of gates across the entrance (set back to enable vehicles to leave the public highway) to manage the use of the car parking areas.

8.25 Improved pedestrian access is proposed, making use of the new canopy over the gatehouse and extending south into the site. This is considered an improvement to the existing arrangements and would create a safe, legible and attractive experience for all visitors to the Centre and, together with the changes to the appearance of the buildings and improved landscaping and planting, would create a more welcoming entrance to the site immediately adjacent to the South Downs Way.

8.26 The vehicular arrangements within the site have been altered to direct most traffic to the west, through the use of planting and materials to identify this as the primary vehicular route. Through the incorporation of the existing internal footpath running along the north of the car park and the over-spill parking areas (some in Grasscrete, used in small spaces adjacent to the existing meadow), the proposal would provide a total of 83 car parking spaces, of which 9 would be disabled bays, and 2 dedicated coach parking spaces. The current parking areas provide 80 car parking spaces, of which 3 are disabled bays and 1 dedicated coach parking space.

8.27 During pre-application discussions, officers considered it vital that the car park area was included as part of the proposals in order to provide a comprehensive and well-rounded scheme. It is considered that the proposals as submitted demonstrate a well-integrated arrangement that complements the aspirations for enhancing the visitor offer of the Centre and supports the National Park Purposes.

8.28 As set out in the comments from the Local Highway Authority, it is considered that the extension to the main building and remodelling of the car park area and wider landscaped areas, would not give rise to traffic generation that would cause a severe detrimental impact on the operation and safety of the local highway network. In addition, the existing, and unaltered, access to the site from Droxford Road has adequate visibility. Therefore, it is considered that in highway and parking terms this proposal is in accordance with relevant policies in the NPPF, JCS 2014, the South Downs Local Plan and the SDNPMP.

9 Conclusion

9.1 It is considered that this proposal would provide significant improvements to the facilities on site and to the landscape setting for the main building, gatehouse and car parking areas. Wider improvements to the site would also be delivered, such as the improved footpaths, to enable staff and visitors to understand and enjoy the purposes of the Sustainability Centre and the wider National Park.

9.2 It is considered that the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the character of the local area, it would conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park, promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park and would not have a harmful impact on the amenity of local residents such as to withhold planning permission. It is considered that any limited harm caused by this proposal can be predominately mitigated against and is outweighed by the significant benefits the proposals would bring.

- 9.3 Therefore, it is considered that the proposal would accord with the relevant policies with the National Planning Policy Framework, the adopted East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy 2014, the East Meon Neighbourhood Development Plan (made on 14 December 2017), the saved policies of the East Hampshire District Local Plan: 2nd Revision 2006, the South Downs Local Plan, the South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan 2014-2019 and the DEFRA Circular and purposes of the National Park.

10 Recommendation and Conditions

- 10.1 It is recommended that the planning permission be approved subject to the conditions set out below.

Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: to comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).
2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the plans and documents listed below under the heading 'Plans and documents referred to in consideration of this application'.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.
3. Notwithstanding the details shown on the approved plans, no development shall be carried out above ground floor slab level until a schedule of all external materials and finishes to be used in the development, including samples of the external timber cladding, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall be carried out in full accordance with the approved schedule and samples.

Reason: To safeguard the appearance of the development in the interest of conserving and enhancing the landscape character of the area.
4. Notwithstanding the details shown on the approved plans, prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, details of the soft landscaping associated with each element of the permitted development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The plans shall include, but are not limited to the following:
 - Species
 - Planting sizes
 - Planting methods including tree pit design and support proposals (underground guying etc)
 - Ground preparation
 - Surface dressing, where appropriate
 - Grassing / turfing operations
 - Seed mixes
 - Written specification for soil amelioration including cultivations, planting methodology, establishment and maintenance operations
 - Any bunding and swales (including cross-sections)

Reason: In the interests of amenity and conserving and enhancing the landscape character of the area. It is considered necessary for this to be a pre-commencement condition as such details need to be taken into account in the construction of the development and thus go to the heart of the planning permission.

5. Notwithstanding the details shown on the approved plans, prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, details of the hard landscaping associated with each element of the permitted development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The plans shall include, but are not limited to the following:

- Hard materials (including the surfacing of the outdoor terrace area)
- Layout of surfaces including any kerbs, edges, steps and ramps
- Location and details of any street furniture, including bollards and entrance gates
- Any tree grilles and tree pit surfaces
- Drainage proposals including gullies, surface covers, surface water channels, surface levels and falls
- Proposed and existing levels and falls
- Boundary treatments including any gabion walls

Reason: In the interests of amenity and conserving and enhancing the landscape character of the area. It is considered necessary for this to be a pre-commencement condition as such details need to be taken into account in the construction of the development and thus go to the heart of the planning permission.

6. All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details (in accordance with Conditions 4 and 5).

All hard landscaping shall also be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the development hereby permitted first being brought into use or in accordance with a programme to be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

All soft landscaping shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and in the first planting and seeding season following when the development is first brought into use. All shrubs, trees and hedge planting shall be maintained free from weeds and shall be protected from damage by vermin and stock. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years, die, are removed, or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing by Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and conserving and enhancing the landscape character of the area.

7. Before the development hereby permitted is first brought into use, a landscape and ecological management plan, including the management objectives and responsibilities and maintenance schedules for a minimum of five years for all the landscaped areas, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Maintenance shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and conserving and enhancing the landscape character of the area.

8. No development shall commence until a scheme to deal with contamination of the site and / or controlled water has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, the scheme shall comprise of a report compiled by a suitably qualified person, and shall include:

- a) A desk top study and conceptual model documenting all the previous and existing land uses of the site and adjacent land;
- b) A site investigation report documenting the ground conditions of the site and incorporating chemical and gas analysis identified as appropriate by the desk top study, and

- c) A remedial strategy detailing the measures to be undertaken to avoid risk from contaminants and /or gases when the site is developed, what methods will be used, what will be achieved and proposals for future maintenance and monitoring. Such scheme shall also include nomination of a suitably qualified person to oversee the implementation of the works.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and to protect the health and future occupiers of the site from any possible effects of land contamination. It is considered necessary for this to be a pre-commencement condition as such details need to be taken into account in the construction of the development and thus go to the heart of the planning permission.

9. If the report required under Condition 8 identifies that site remediation is required, then the development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use (unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority) until a verification report demonstrating the effectiveness of the remediation works carried out and a completion certificate confirming that the approved remediation scheme has been implemented in full shall both have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The verification report and completion certificate shall be submitted in accordance with the approved scheme and undertaken by a competent person in accordance with DEFRA and the Environment Agency's 'Model Procedures for the Management of Land Contamination, CLR 11'.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and to protect the health and future occupiers of the site from any possible effects of land contamination.

10. If during construction, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then no further development (unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority), shall be carried out until a method statement identifying, assessing the risk and proposing remediation measures, together with a programme, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The remediation measures shall be carried out as approved and in accordance with the approved programme.

Reason: To ensure that no unacceptable risks are caused to humans, controlled waters or the wider environment during and following the development works.

11. No works pursuant to this permission shall commence, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, until full details of surface water drainage system, which shall follow the principles of sustainable drainage (SuDs), have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The drainage shall be provided in accordance with the approved details before first occupation of the development and shall be retained thereafter.

Reason: To ensure adequate provision for surface water drainage. It is considered necessary for this to be a pre-commencement condition as such details need to be taken into account in the construction of the development and thus go to the heart of the planning permission.

12. No works pursuant to this permission shall commence until details of a scheme for foul drainage (including a full drainage layout together with construction details) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details before any part of the development is first occupied and shall be retained thereafter.

Reason: To ensure adequate provision for foul drainage. It is considered necessary for this to be a pre-commencement condition as such details need to be taken into account

in the construction of the development and thus go to the heart of the planning permission.

13. The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until details of the long term management and maintenance arrangements for any parts of the drainage system which will not be adopted (including any ponds, ditches, swale, permeable paving, land drains) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The submitted details should specify the responsibilities of each party for the implementation of the SuDs scheme, a timetable for implementation, provide a management plan and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development which should include arrangements for adoption by any public authority or statutory undertaker and any other arrangement to secure the operation of the scheme throughout its lifetime. The management and maintenance arrangements shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details over the period specified.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory surface water drainage.

14. The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until a scheme has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority which specifies the provisions to be made for the control of noise emanating from all fixed plant associated with the development and such a scheme shall be in accordance with mitigation measures identified in the Plant Noise Assessment produced by Cole Jarman (reference 18/0355/RI) and Ventilation Strategy Statement (dated 22nd August 2018). The noise mitigation scheme shall be implemented, maintained and retained in accordance with the approved details and shall not be altered without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the amenity of the area is not detrimentally affected by the use of the site.

15. The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until details have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority addressing the proposed kitchen ventilation / extraction system that will be used on the site, including the required maintenance regime for the system. The details shall be prepared by a competent person for the purpose of assessing potential odour and noise nuisance to surrounding properties. The details should be drawn up with regard to Guidance on the Control of Odour and Noise from Commercial Kitchen Exhaust Systems produced by Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs and in accordance with the mitigation measures set out in the Plant Noise Assessment produced by Cole Jarman (reference 18/0355/RI). The agreed details shall be fully implemented before the use hereby approved is commenced and the equipment shall be installed, operated and maintained in accordance with the approved details and shall be retained thereafter.

Reason: To ensure that the amenity of the area is not detrimentally affected by the use of the site.

16. Notwithstanding the details shown on the approved plans, prior to the development hereby permitted first being brought into use, details of all external lighting (designed in accordance with the External Lighting Statement produced by SGA Consulting Limited-dated 27th September 2018) shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the approved details and thereby retained as such unless a variation is subsequently submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to control the development in the interests of night time amenity, tranquillity and to protect and conserve the International Dark Night Skies Reserve.

17. No external lighting, excepting that approved under Condition 16, shall be installed on the building or within the site unless otherwise agreed in writing by Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to control the development in the interests of night time amenity, tranquillity and to protect and conserve the International Dark Night Skies Reserve.

18. Notwithstanding the details shown on the approved plans, before the development hereby permitted is first brought into use, details of refuse and recycling storage facilities shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved refuse and recycling storage facilities shall be implemented prior to the occupation of the development and thereafter retained.

Reason: To ensure that adequate provision is made for the storage of refuse and recyclable materials and to protect the character and amenity of the area.

19. Notwithstanding the details shown on the approved plans, before the development hereby permitted is first brought into use, details of the visitor and staff cycle parking facilities shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved cycle parking details shall be implemented prior to the occupation of the development and thereafter retained.

Reason: To provide for alternative modes of transport.

20. The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use unless and until the car parking and turning provision shown on the submitted plans has been provided on site. Once provided the parking provision shall be kept available for that use.

Reason: To ensure an adequate and satisfactory standard of parking provision.

21. No works pursuant to this permission shall commence until a Construction Environmental Management Plan, to include:

- construction vehicle routing,
- deliveries timing,
- the provision of loading / offloading areas,
- wheel wash facilities,
- storage of plant,
- site office,
- contractors parking area,
- details of security hoarding,
- measures to control emission of dust and dirt,
- measures to control noise and vibration,
- a scheme for recycling / disposing of waste resulting from construction works, and
- ecological mitigation measures (and incorporating the measures set out in the Preliminary Bat Survey Report produced by Calyx Environmental Limited dated December 2018),

has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved plan shall be implemented and maintained until the development is complete unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to control the development in the interest of maintaining a safe and efficient highway network and in the interest of the amenity of the area. It is considered necessary for this to be a pre-commencement condition as such details need to be taken into account in the construction of the development and thus go to the heart of the planning permission.

22. During construction of the development hereby permitted, no works or deliveries shall take place outside the hours set out below unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

- 8am to 6pm Mondays to Fridays
- 9am to 1pm Saturdays
- No works shall take place on Sundays, Bank or Public Holidays

Reason: In order to protect the character and amenities of the local area during the period of construction.

23. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in full accordance with measures identified in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment produced by Professional Tree Services Limited (reference SUST/2134aia-Rev A, dated 24th August 2018), unless otherwise agreed in writing by the South Downs National Park Authority.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and conserving and enhancing the landscape character of the area.

24. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in full accordance with the mitigation and enhancement measures identified in the Preliminary Bat Survey Report produced by Calyx Environmental Limited (dated December 2018), unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that wildlife and biodiversity are protected and enhanced during the construction of the development.

25. The proposed covered deck area (as marked 12 on drawing reference 8630-GA251 Rev F) shall not be used or occupied outside the hours of 8am to 8pm.

Reason: In order to protect the character and amenities of the local area.

26. No loudspeakers, public address / tannoy system or amplified music shall be used externally on the site at any time unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To safeguard the tranquillity of the area and neighbouring amenity.

11 Crime and Disorder Implications

11.1 It is considered that the proposal does not raise any crime and disorder implications.

12 Human Rights Implications

12.1 This planning application has been considered in light of statute and case law and any interference with an individual's human rights is considered to be proportionate to the aims sought to be realised.

13 Equality Act 2010

13.1 Due regard has been taken of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010.

14 Proactive Working

14.1 The SDNPA, during the pre-application process and the consideration of the current application, has worked with the applicant to ensure a development is brought forward that conserves and enhances the natural beauty, cultural heritage and wildlife of the National Park.

TIM SLANEY

Director of Planning

South Downs National Park Authority

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Appendices

1. Site Location Map
2. Plans and documents referred to in consideration of this application

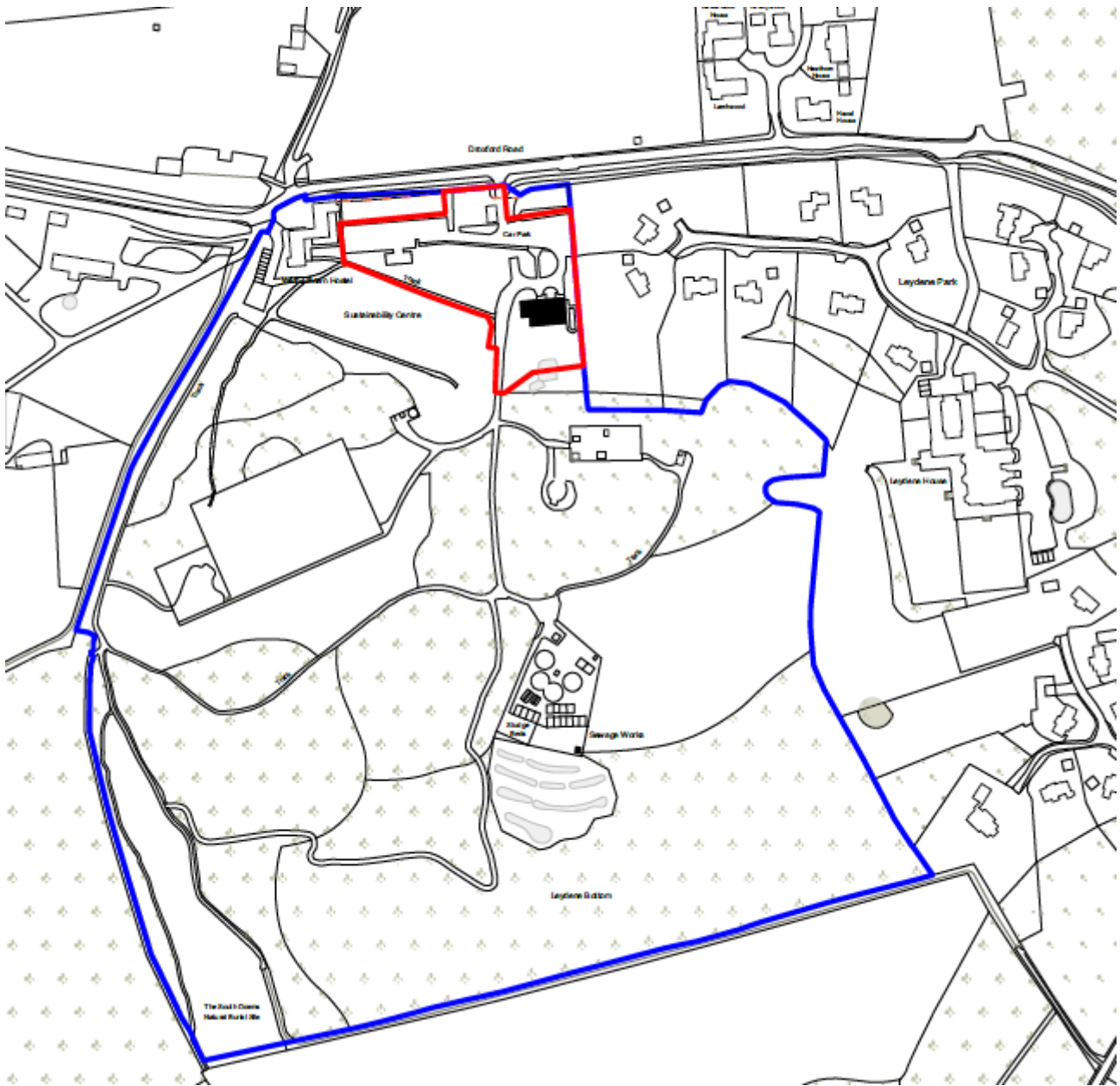
SDNPA
Consultees

Legal Services & Major Planning Projects and Performance Manager

Background Documents

[Full details of all application documents, plans and consultation responses](#)
[National Planning Policy Framework 2018](#)
[East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy 2014](#)
[East Hampshire District Local Plan: 2nd Revision 2006](#)
[East Meon Neighbourhood Plan](#)
[South Downs Local Plan](#)
[South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan 2014-2019](#)
[Full details of the pre-application response](#)
[Design Review Panel Comments \(20 November 2017\)](#)

**Agenda Item 7 Report PC05/19 Appendix I
Site Location Map**



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Agenda Item 7 Report PC05/19 Appendix 2
Plans and documents referred to in consideration of this application

The application has been assessed and recommendation is made on the basis of the following plans and documents submitted:

Plan or Document Title	Reference	Revision / Version	Date Received	Status
Site Boundaries	8630-GA152	B	04.10.2018	Approved
Proposed Block Plan	GA-151	A	04.10.2018	Approved
Block Plan	8630-PL002	B	15.10.2018	Approved
Proposed Lower Ground Floor Plan	8630-GA250	D	04.10.2018	Approved
Proposed Upper Ground Floor Plan	8630-GA251	F	04.10.2018	Approved
Proposed Roof Plan	8630-GA252	D	04.10.2018	Approved
Proposed North Elevation	8630-GA650	E	04.10.2018	Approved
Proposed East Elevation	8630-GA651	D	04.10.2018	Approved
Proposed South Elevation	8630-GA652	E	04.10.2018	Approved
Proposed West Elevation	8630-GA653	E	04.10.2018	Approved
Proposed Section AA and Section CC	8630-GA850	B	04.10.2018	Approved
Proposed Section AA	8630-GA851	B	04.10.2018	Approved
Proposed Section BB	8630-GA852	B	04.10.2018	Approved
Proposed Section CC and DD	8630-GA853	D	04.10.2018	Approved
Proposed Section EE and FF	8630-GA854	B	04.10.2018	Approved
Proposed Gatehouse	8630-GA301	A	15.10.2018	Approved
Landscape Masterplan	L01	D	25.01.2019	Approved
Detail Plan	L03	B	04.10.2018	Approved
Planting Strategy	L04	A	04.10.2018	Approved
Illustrative Sections	L05	A	04.10.2018	Approved
Aboricultural Impact Assessment produced by Professional Tree Services Limited	SUST/2134aia-REVA		04.10.2018	Approved
Energy & Carbon Assessment for Sustainability Centre	Dated 22/8/2018		04.10.2018	Approved
Plant Noise Assessment produced by Cole Jarman	18/0355/RI		04.10.2018	Approved
Ventilation Strategy Statement	Dated 22/8/2018		04.10.2018	Approved
External Lighting Statement produced by SGA Consulting Limited	Dated 27/9/2018		04.10.2018	Approved
Earthworks Trust: Travel Plan 2017-2020	Travel Plan, September 2017		04.10.2018	Approved
Earthworks Trust: Travel to Work Plan	Staff Travel Plan, September 2017		04.10.2018	Approved
Preliminary Bat Survey Report, produced by Calyx Environmental Limited	Dated December 2018		14.12.2018	Approved

Reasons: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.