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STEDHAM WITH IPING PARISH COUNCIL

LANDSCAPE REVIEW OF POTENTIAL SITES FOR THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The following review has been prepared by Philip Russell-Vick DipLA CMLI, Landscape Director of Enplan and a Chartered Landscape Architect with over 30 years' experience. He has worked extensively in areas of Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment, detailed design/implementation of landscape schemes, development strategies and masterplanning and in the coordination of EIA. He is one of the country's leading professional expert witnesses in the discipline of landscape and visual impact. He has appeared at over 80 Public Inquiries and public examinations across the UK.

The discussion (and subsequent) recommendation in relation to each site below considers the merits of each site in landscape terms. It does not take into account material considerations (that should be taken into account by the Steering Group when choosing sites) other than landscape & visual impact.

1. Bridgelands Farm

Former group of large pre-fabricated agricultural barn buildings which, having been converted, are currently utilised as Use Class B8 (Storage and Distribution) and Sui-Generis Use (Non-Domestic Veterinary Clinic). As previously developed land this site evidently has some residential development potential but given that the site lies within the National Park such development would need to demonstrate that it protected and enhanced the landscape, i.e. be able to demonstrate an enhancement over the existing condition, in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The site is exposed to views from the adjoining Ingram's Green Lane and longer views from the countryside and scarp of the Downs to the south-west. Consequently, any residential would need to be constrained to the current footprint of the existing built development both in terms of built footprint and the extent of buildings and hardstandings. Considerable care would need to be taken with the design, appearance and height of any new buildings, as well as with the design of external works, in order to minimise the effects of domesticating the landscape with garden boundaries and paraphernalia. The site's northern and western boundaries would require sensitive landscape treatment to soften the visual impact of the buildings.

It is considered that a maximum of 5 detached/semi-detached units may be considered suitable on this site in landscape terms subject to careful design.

2. Stedham Sawmills

Land partially previously developed land currently used for storage and employment uses, some of which is outside, and a similarly sized area that is open and apparently disused, and which has historically benefited from outline planning permission for 2746 m² of B1 light industrial

Enplan, 10 Upper Grosvenor Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 2EP Offices also at Milton Keynes

Directors: PG Russell-Vick DipLA CMLI • MA Carpenter BA(Hons) MRTPI • RJ Hodgetts BA(Hons) DipLA CMLI

01892 545460

info@enplan.net

www.enplan.net

employment uses and associated car parking and access. This planning permission is understood to have lapsed in September 2016.

The site has a well-concealed access from the A272 and is further screened by woodland to the west and north. The eastern boundary comprises a hedgerow with scattered mature trees that help partially screen the existing buildings and storage from views to the east in the summer months, i.e. from The Street. In the winter it is anticipated that these views are considerably more open and more of the existing storage and sawmill buildings would be visible.

The site's previously developed nature and its general containment suggest that in the context of the National Park this is a site of relatively low landscape susceptibility to new built development. Whilst the principle of planning policy to protect and enhance applies here, as it does to all of the land within the Parish, a case for meeting the policy test is likely to be more readily met here than at all of the other sites.

Buffer areas to protect mature trees along the western and northern boundaries would be required. The eastern boundary would require sensitive treatment, both in terms of new landscaping to provide further screening and the appearance of the elevation of new buildings, as seen in views from The Street. Well designed and landscaped a new 'elevation' would be an enhancement over the existing elevation and assist in improving the rural setting of the village.

Retention of the Public Rights of Way along the western and eastern boundaries respectively would be essential and the accesses to School Lane retained. These accesses should not be developed to provide general vehicular access. The amenity of users should be protected as far as possible with the new development not backing onto these routes.

The SDNPA proposal for an allocation for between 16 and 20 residential dwellings plus 3000m² B1 Use is considered appropriate for this site in landscape terms.

3. Rectory Field

A single large roughly rectangular field of rough pasture adjoining the built edge of Stedham along its eastern and southern boundaries. The other two boundaries are formed by Stedham Hangar. The land rises from south to north and also falls more steeply away to the east. Whilst the very southern and eastern edges of the site are well contained by the existing settlement but the rising contours of the site mean that the middle and northern parts are visually exposed from the south and east giving rise to mid and long distant views from Stedham Common and the scarp slope of the Downs. The wooded Stedham Hangar is a steep river cliff and the woodland is not of any great depth. Consequently development along the northern edge of the site would be visible through and between trees in views from the north.

The Iping-Stedham Rise is a highly sensitive area in landscape terms and provides separation between the settlements of Stedham and Iping. The site as submitted has very little capacity for development. There is some limited potential in the south-east corner of the site which may be considered appropriate in wider landscape terms. This area is bounded by the existing settlement and by the rising ground to the west and would be visually contained in long distance views from the wider landscape. It is noted however that localised impacts on existing dwellings that border, and some short distance views from within the village would incur significant visual impacts should any new development come forward in this location. Although there is no right to a private view in planning, effects on the visual amenity of residents should be taken into the planning balance.

In landscape terms, this site is not appropriate for development.

4. Land to rear of Sorrells

This site comprises two paddocks set between the A272 and the edge of the settlement. The site is entirely open along its eastern boundary and would be exposed in views from The Street at the entrance to the village. The partially wooded northern boundary would offer some screening from the A272 and the boundary with the Stedham Sawmill site would contain any visual effects from the wider landscape to the west. To the south are several residencies that back onto or partially overlook these paddocks.

The high visual exposure of the site from nearby views from the east mean that intense landscape treatment would be required to acceptably mitigate the effects but this would not be achieved for a considerable period of time as planting matured. The effect on the rural setting of the village and sense of separation from the A272 would be substantially affected by the development of this site.

This site is not suitable for development in landscape terms.

5. Land within Stedham Hangar

This site is part of an existing wooded area adjoining the woodland of Stedham Hangar. Whilst its eastern and western boundaries appear to be part of a former wooded or hedgerow boundary and comprise mainly deciduous broadleaved species, the interior is a plantation of spruce and larch, so in itself not of any considerable landscape value. However, the site is steeply sloping from north to south and would be exposed, without the trees, to mid and long distant views from Stedham Common and the scarp slope of the Downs to the south.

This site is not suitable for development in landscape terms.

6. The Old Studio

This is small site set within the modest sized gardens of an existing property. Whilst a Neighbourhood Plan could in theory allocate such a site for development, it is not in this case considered appropriate for the allocation of a single dwelling, given the site's small size and for the potential to adversely impact upon the amenity of the existing property.

In this instance the detailed design of any scheme would have to be considered to determine acceptability and the most appropriate planning route for these would be via a planning application where these matters can be considered in detail.

I cannot recommend that development in this location would be acceptable in landscape terms when the detailed design is not known.

7. Land west of West Lodge

This site is a rectangle of land alongside the access drive to the Rotherhill Nursery & Garden Centre. It comprises part of a generally open, attractive parkland-like field immediately north of a lightly wooded area of clear-stemmed mature deciduous trees. Whilst it benefits from screening to long views from the south, east and west it would be locally open to views from all directions. The site is intrinsically attractive and any new development would require considerable new landscaping to provide screening and a setting for any new development. Such landscaping would take a lengthy period to mature before making any new development potentially acceptable in landscape terms but it is considered that the short to mid-term effects would not be acceptable.

This site is not suitable for development in landscape terms.

8. Land east of Iping Lane

This site comprises two areas both of which are rectangular in area and form parts of existing fields without any fixed boundary along their eastern edges. The southern of the two sites would be partially screened by a bank and hedgerow from the wider landscape to the west. Its eastern side would be entirely open. The northern area would be concealed by a more extensive width of wooded tree belt along its western edge and by steeply rising landform to the south. This is a relatively well-concealed site in the context of the National Park but it is undeveloped land and not particularly well related to the settlement of Iping, by virtue of being set up above the riverside location of Iping and set back behind woodland. It is unlikely that the development of this unspoilt site could be considered to protect and enhance the character and appearance of the National Park.

This site is not suitable for development in landscape terms.

9. Land south of the Hamilton Arms.

This is a wooded site with some open areas by the primary school.

The development of a well-designed car park could be acceptable in this location, in landscape terms, subject to detail siting and an appropriate scheme that reflected local rural and wooded context.

10. Tote Hill Barn and Hangar

Tote Hill Barn comprises a traditional but small barn of stone under a plain tile roof with a modern metal lean to. It is understood that there is a current planning application to convert this into residential use. This is likely to be acceptable in landscape terms subject to the sensitive conversion of the traditional barn and the design and mass of the replacement element for the lean to structure.

Tote Hill Hangar is an existing steel frame clad structure under a two-storey high pitched roof built in the 1920's by the Bedford Estate for light aircraft storage when Wispers, to the west, was in use as a country house. It was later converted into a gymnasium for school use but more recently has been used as private storage. It has a large area of hardstanding on its south side; now used for parking and storage. Its demolition and replacement with a sensitively designed single or semi-detached pair of houses could be perceived to be an enhancement to the National Park in landscape terms, subject to a high quality design.

In addition, care would need to be taken with the design of external works, in order to minimise the effects of domesticating the landscape with garden boundaries and paraphernalia.

Whilst a Neighbourhood Plan could allocate both existing buildings for redevelopment, given that both proposals are small-scale and essentially replacement/conversions of existing buildings where design and any landscape effects are the key matter rather than planning principle, the most appropriate planning route for these would be via a planning application where these matters can be considered in detail.

As such I cannot recommend that development in this location would be acceptable in landscape terms when the key details are not provided.

11. Whispers

Originally a large country house called Wispers, designed by Norman Shaw and Grade II Listed but in educational use since 1939 (Wispers School, then St Cuthman's from 1956 to 2004 and, recently, the Durand Academy), the site includes the extended main house, various cottages, outbuildings and the derelict remnants of a large two-storey classroom block. A scheme to convert the school back into residential use in the mid 2000's apparently failed, as has a very recent planning application by Durand Academy to extend the education use considerably.

As the site of a listed building suffering considerable dereliction and neglect, some form of appropriate active use and long term security for the restoration of the site and the future of its buildings would be highly desirable in landscape terms. The nature and scale of any new use would need to protect and enhance the National Park and not affect adversely on the fabric or setting of the listed building.

Evidently residential or educational uses of a scale that would not be out of keeping given its location could be considered acceptable in landscape terms. However, without further information on the exact development proposed a recommendation on the acceptability of development in landscape terms cannot be provided.