

**Agenda Item 7**  
**Report PC 20/21-40**

Report to	<b>Planning Committee</b>
Date	<b>15 April 2021</b>
By	<b>Director of Planning</b>
Local Authority	<b>East Hampshire District Council</b>
Application Number	<b>SDNP/19/06024/FUL</b>
Applicant	<b>Southcott Homes (Fareham) Ltd</b>
Application	<b>Development of 12 new dwellings comprising 1 no. detached 2 storey dwelling and 10 no. semi-detached 2 storey dwellings, detached garage block, 2 no. new access from Coombe Road and 5 metre landscape buffer on southern boundary.</b>
Address	<b>Land adjacent to Coppice Cottages, Coombe Road, East Meon, Hampshire</b>

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**Recommendation: That planning permission be refused for the reasons as set out in paragraph 10.1 of the report.**

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### **Executive Summary**

The application site is an area of arable land on the edge of East Meon, south of Coombe Road. It is in an elevated position and is prominent on the road and in longer views. The application site is allocated for 11 dwellings in Policy EM16 of the East Meon Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The application has been subject of lengthy discussions with the applicant's project team and East Meon Parish Council has also been involved to an extent. The layout and building design has been revised as part of this negotiation process. Whilst improvements have been made to the scheme, there are landscape concerns and the scheme proposes an overly suburban character along the frontage of the road and trees, causing harm to the rural road and landscape character. A reason for refusal on landscape grounds is therefore proposed.

The revised submission included drainage proposals to manage surface water within the site. Surface water flooding is a concern in the area but the drainage proposals have not been sufficiently informed with evidence. Proposals do not demonstrate that they are feasible and that there will not be flooding within the site and no increase of flood risk elsewhere. In the absence of this, refusal on this basis is proposed.

Another reason for refusal is based on the absence of a demonstrated safe and effective access to the site, particularly for large and emergency vehicles.

A fourth reason for refusal is recommended on the basis of not having secured various Section 106 requirements securing a nitrate neutrality mitigation scheme and on site affordable housing provision.

This application is placed before committee due to the policy considerations and level of local interest.

## 1. Site Description

- 1.1. The application site comprises a rectangular field of 0.50 hectares of arable land. It is located south of the 1950s semi-detached houses at Coombe Road and west of Coppice Cottages and a small car park. There are hedgerows along all boundaries of the site. There are also trees along the eastern boundary and a mature tree on the south east corner of the site. The application site is on a slope and is located on an elevated level from the road.
- 1.2. A public right of way (footpath 7b) runs to the east of the site from Coombe Road, through the neighbouring car park and south towards Duncombe Farm and hill. The site does not have an existing vehicular access. Footpath 13 is located at the southern end of Duncombe Road heading north. There is no footpath connection along Coombe Road at the moment.
- 1.3. The site falls within landscape character area E3b: Meon Valley - Valley Sides, as classified in the South Downs Landscape Character Assessment 2020 (SDLCA). This area is formed by sloping ground between the river valley bottom and the crest of the slope. The site is prominent from Coombe Road and from distant high ground level to the south and north beyond the settlement, including the hill at Duncombe Farm and Park Hill across the River Meon.
- 1.4. East Meon is located within an area susceptible of groundwater flooding. Environment Agency mapping shows that the site is not susceptible from surface water flooding, although the Neighbourhood Development Plan and representations do refer to surface water flooding issues along Coombe Road. A degree of water logging and run-off down the hill is evident, especially in the winter months.
- 1.5. The East Meon Conservation Area is located approximately 250 metres to the north east of the site. No listed buildings or other designated heritage assets are located nearby.
- 1.6. The application site is located within the Dark Sky Core (Zone E0). This is also an area of medium-low level of relative tranquillity as shown in the SDNP Tranquillity Study.

## 2. Relevant Planning History

- 2.1. No relevant planning history.

## 3. Proposal

- 3.1. The proposal has been subject to amendments over the course of the application. Originally the application proposed 11 dwellings with no affordable housing provision, and the current proposals are for 12 dwellings and the following housing mix:

Dwelling size	Open market	Affordable	Total
2 bedroom	4	4	8
3 bedroom	2	2	4
Total	6	6	12

- 3.2. The latest submission proposed 6 affordable dwellings, of which 4 to be of social rent tenure and 2 of shared ownership. The remaining 6 dwellings would be open market units. This would equate 50% of the dwellings to be affordable.
- 3.3. This proposal also includes the provision of a footway on the south side of Coombe Road along the boundary of the site, two vehicular accesses and parking throughout the site in the form of a car barn, tandem parking and garages. 28 parking spaces are proposed.
- 3.4. A green infrastructure feature (wildlife corridor) is proposed along the southern boundary of the site as well as nutrient neutrality mitigation for internationally protected areas in the Solent.

## 4. Consultations

### 4.1. East Meon Parish Council:

No objection, but raising concerns. An unequivocal 'no objection' comment to be provided once these are addressed:

*Main issues:*

- Flooding in this area is a concern. The Parish Council would like to see detailed effectiveness analysis, including an indication of what will happen to the water if/when

swales are full and consideration to more substantial drain along the back the development. The absolute minimum would be that development doesn't worsen the situation.

- Confirmation is sought from Southern Water that there is capacity for 12 dwellings without overflowing.
- Maintaining and upgrading private drainage, sewage and power systems, which have the potential to represent an unsustainable financial burden on people living on site.
- The Parish Council suggested to the developer continuously since 2019 for the footpath to be located on the north side of Coombe Road: a continuous footpath from Duncombe Road to village and school. A southern footpath would be rarely used and represent a waste of resources. This could present difficulties, but no evidence has been provided to confirm whether is unfeasible or not. The north option would also help to calm traffic in the area. The Parish Council understands that it is not consistent with the Neighbourhood Development Plan, but it would be a disappointment if this opportunity to improve pedestrian safety is not taken.
- Why hasn't electricity, rather than Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), been proposed as the main energy source of dwellings?

*Other comments:*

- No objection to 12 dwellings instead of 11, subject to compliance with affordable housing requirements.
- The wildlife corridor should be implemented in full, perpetually maintained and secured in a planning obligation.
- Request for no development south of the site and that the land shall not be used other than for agriculture unless agreed by the Parish Council.
- Removal of permitted development rights to avoid the over extension of small homes.
- The wildlife buffer should be of native species, typical hedgerow, encouraging wildlife.
- Not convinced with the usefulness of the green roof carport.
- The height of buildings could impact neighbours to the north. The roof of plots 11 and 12 do not meet the NDP policy as the pitch would be too shallow. How would bin stores be used, and where would bins be stored?
- Positive to see that proposals meet parking requirements of the Parking SPD.
- Construction management plan to be conditioned.

#### 4.2. **EHDC Drainage Engineer:** Objection.

- Ground water monitoring only took place for one week from 28th January to 4th February 2021. Information submitted provides an opinion, rather than conclusive evidence that there will be a minimum of 1m unsaturated zone below the base level of the proposed soakaways.
- Soakaway 3 is shown at a distance of 6.00m from Plot 12, but this will depend on the actual ground conditions encountered. In order to provide the usual 10.0m clearance, the site layout would require amending.
- The proposed drainage appears to conflict with the root protection zone of mature trees along the eastern boundary and also with the proposed planting elsewhere.
- Flood flow routes plans for an exceedance event show the areas of potential flooding contained within the parking and access areas. During an exceedance event the western access could be flooded restricting access.
- The box culvert under the new access road is likely to be difficult to maintain due to its limited height.
- No evidence has been provided to show that the rain gardens will work effectively.

#### 4.3. **HCC Flood and Water Management:** Comments:

- Groundwater monitoring evidence submitted is considered sufficient to agree a 5m minimum unsaturated zone below ground level.
- The drainage layout shows 5.4m, 4.1m and 4.6m deep soakaways and there is insufficient information to demonstrate that there will be 1 metre unsaturated zone below the base of the proposed soakaways. This would require a re-design of the drainage system or to undertake additional groundwater assessment to a depth of at least 6450mm.
- The applicant has not submitted the requested detailed hydraulic calculations. Network Hydraulic Calculations should demonstrate that the entire drainage system is achievable and it will not increase surface water flood risk on or off site.
- Hydraulic Calculations are vital to demonstrate that the proposed drainage system and quantum of layout is achievable, whilst ensuring that flood risk will not be increased on or off site. Detailed hydraulic calculations together with the drainage drawings are requirements of our surface water checklist for every full planning application, as changes to the drainage strategy should be addressed before permission is given to avoid unnecessarily restricting potential drainage design solutions.

#### 4.4. **SDNPA Landscape Officer:**

*Negative effects upon the character of the rural lane:*

- 2 accesses, loss of hedgerow and new footway with kerbs contribute to suburbanisation of the rural lane in combination with building design and pillars and walls at entrance.
- Narrow lanes, lack of painted lines, lack of standard pavements, closely bounded vegetation, etc. contribute to the rural character and distinctive qualities of a route or roadway. Paving fails to mitigate for the loss of all these other characteristic features, thus rural character is eroded.

*Drainage:*

- Site located at the bottom of the hill taking significant surface water from neighbouring land. Surface water flooding is a problem along Coombe Road.
- Drainage survey was undertaken post design-development and so the scheme has not been designed proactively with drainage in mind. Not landscape-led.
- Relies on post-design engineering solutions (pipes to soakaways to carry excess of surface water to ground). Soakaways on average last 15-20 years, soakaway 1 is located on the site boundary and 3 is in a private garden. Soakaway 2 is located beneath a swale and attenuation basin. There are questions around how these will work during a storm event, who and how will maintain these to ensure they work well for the lifetime of the site. also, soakaways are very deep.
- Swales are positive but squeezed around the edges, engineered and uniform. Question over their multi-functional design.
- Culverts add maintenance burden and are the opposite of a SuDS solution based upon 'at-surface' water management. Water within hidden pipes makes maintenance difficult.
- Priority should be given to avoidance and minimal hard standing. This clearly has not inspired the design. There are no proposals to store/re-use surface water as part of the site's sustainability measures.
- Drainage design based on a groundwater level that is 'to be confirmed'.

*Other:*

- Sides of site should remain undeveloped and trees protected.
- Concern with the dominance of buildings in the street scene.
- Previous recommendations to simplify architectural choices have not been taken. The layout of the site has been amended to work better with contours, except one building which runs across contours.

- Courtyard layouts are characteristic of chalk valley-bottom settlements, but this site is in rising ground and it is not clear what degree of levelling would be needed to facilitate this.
- Buildings towards the higher part of site are lower in height, which is positive.
- Materials would need to be of high quality.
- The submitted Ecosystem Services Statement is insufficient. It is well within the scope of the project to deliver many if not all of opportunities of ecosystem services.
- The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is insufficient.

#### *Conclusion*

- The layout in the Neighbourhood Development Plan has driven the design, which is considered inappropriate and not landscape-led. Starting with the landscape could have avoided or minimised negative effects and maximised the multiple benefits achievable at the site.

#### 4.5. **Southern Water:** No objection:

- There is currently adequate capacity in the local sewerage network to accommodate foul flow from the above proposed 12 new dwelling development. An application to connect to a public sewer would be required.

#### 4.6. **HCC Highways Officer:** Objection:

- Inadequate means of access: access points are not wide enough to allow for two way passing, which would lead to unnecessary stopping or reversing onto the highway, which is a safety concern.
- No evidence has been provided as to whether the Fire Service would be able to access the site, manoeuvre and egress back onto the highway in a forward gear. Without such evidence, the Highway Authority cannot agree the access proposals.
- The eastern access should be a wider bell mouth junction.
- The proposed footway on the frontage would be subject to a S278 approval. It is not clear how the footway would formally connect to the existing network.
- Suitable drainage should be in place on the access to prevent surface water from the site discharging on the adjacent highway.

#### 4.7. **HCC Fire and Rescue:** Comment:

- Access and facilities for Fire Service Appliances and Firefighters should be in accordance with current Building Regulations.

#### 4.8. **Tree Officer:** Comment:

- The drainage plans will, in all probability, have a negative impact on the existing boundary trees if undertaken by mechanical trenching. A tree protection plan and an arboricultural method statement is required.

#### 4.9. **Design Review Panel:** Comments:

- The Panel feel that the indicative plan within the NDP is not demonstrably landscape-led. There should have been a better understanding of the landscape. The design approach is not robust enough to support.
- The Panel recommends a full review and context appraisal of the site. It would seem that the built environment follows the contours of the valley - Coombe Road is a good example of this. In the older parts of the village there are more ad-hoc, random arrangements of developments, the Panel feel a better understanding of these areas would help inform the proposed layout on this site.
- Opportunity to access this site from the adjoining car park, this should be considered.
- The Panel are not convinced that the proposed footpath is best located along the 'street frontage', we think that would urbanise a rural lane. The Panel feel the use of swales, to help mitigate against surface water runoff and the land drainage issues, should be a key feature of your landscape strategy. House sizes are excessive.

- 4.10. **Sustainable Construction:** Comments:
- Overall, compliant with Sustainable Construction SPD requirements.
  - Clarification regarding amount of green roof and whether plots 1, 2, 4, 5 & 6 will include EV charging points. Conditions recommended.
- 4.11. **EHDC Housing Enabling Officer:** No objection.
- 4.12. **SDNPA Design Officer:** No objection.
- 4.13. **EHDC Refuse and Recycling Team:** No objection.
- 4.14. **Archaeology Officer:** No objection subject to condition.
- 4.15. **Ecology Officer:** No objection subject to conditions.
- 4.16. **Natural England:** No objection subject to Section 106 legal agreement.
- 4.17. **HCC Public Rights of Way Officer:** No objection.
- 4.18. **Environment Agency:** No objection.

## 5. Representations

- 5.1. A total of 20 third-party representations have been received: 15 objecting to the proposal and 5 neutral comments. The representations raised the following issues:

### Objection

- Concerns with the great amount of surface water on this site when there is a significant rainfall, discharging onto Coombe Road and in occasions, flooding gardens and houses north of the road. Roads, parking and houses will exacerbate the problem. The loss of the hedge may too.
- Coombe road is busy with traffic, including school traffic, which lead to congestion. Additional access points will make the road more dangerous for pedestrians having to cross. It would be better if the path was on the north side of the road.
- Parking pressures in the area. Not sufficient parking spaces proposes and the number of dwellings is too many. Households usually have more than 2 cars and even a caravan. The majority of garages are to be used for storage.
- The site is too small for this development.
- New houses will directly look into properties north of the road, losing privacy and daylight. New properties are too close to others. Loss of views.
- The sewage system will not cope with extra development. It should be upgraded. How would it neutralise nitrogen?
- Plots 5 and 6 would read as being identical. Plot 1 is prominent and oppressive, creating a visual stop. Houses, due to their scale and bulk, are too dominating for this position, blocking the view out of the village from Duncombe Road. Houses 10 and 11 are unsympathetic to the traditional layout of the historic village.
- The plans do not make clear the number of dwellings (11 or 12). Plans do not show any rental accommodation or affordable housing.

### Neutral

- The proposal should include opportunities for biodiversity improvements in and around the development and it should conserve biodiversity. Swift bricks should be incorporated into this development. Measures should be put in place to protect habitats and species. Is the removal of the hedge compliant with legislation? Could part of it be retained?
- Other bat surveys show that there are further species in the area than what's stated in the submitted reports. Mitigation should be up to date. Lighting should be designed to avoid disturbance to wildlife. Corridors to be installed to help other species and planting encourage wildlife and pollinators, including permeable boundaries.
- There is a drainage issue. Houses in Coombe Road suffer from run-off floodwater. The drainage report needs to make appropriate remedial actions to address local concerns.

The soak-away system to absorb water will not cope with water coming from outside the site.

- Only 2 parking spaces per home will add to parking issues in the village. Most households will have 2 or 3 cars and may have visitors.
- Construction works should be managed,. Vehicles should be contained within the site only during the construction process.

## **6. Planning Policy Context**

- 6.1. Applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The relevant statutory Development Plan comprises of the **South Downs Local Plan 2014-2033** and the **East Meon Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016-2032**. The relevant policies 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 of their areas;
  - 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 well-being of the local community in pursuit of these purposes.

### National Planning Policy Framework and Circular 2010

- 6.3. Government policy relating to National Parks is set out in English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010 and The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was issued and came into effect in February 2019. The 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.

### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019

- 6.4. The National Planning Policy Framework has been considered as a whole. The following NPPF sections have been considered in the assessment of this application:

- Achieving sustainable development
- Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- Building a strong, competitive economy
- Promoting healthy and safe communities
- Promoting sustainable transport
- Making effective use of land
- Achieving well-designed places
- Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

### Relationship of the Development Plan to the NPPF and Circular 2010

- 6.5. The development plan policies listed below have been assessed for their compliance with the NPPF and are considered complainant with it.

### The South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan 2020-2025

- 6.6. The South Downs Partnership Management Plan as amended for 2020-2025 on 19 December 2019, sets out a Vision, Outcomes, Policies and a Delivery Framework for the National Park over the next five years. The relevant outcomes include:

- Outcome 1: Landscape and Natural Beauty
- Outcome 2: Increasing Resilience
- Outcome 3: Habitats and Species

- Outcome 7: Health and Wellbeing
- Outcome 9: Great Places to Live

Other relevant documents

- Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (2020)
- Sustainable Construction SPD (2020)
- Draft Parking SPD (second draft currently undergoing public consultation)
- South Downs Landscape Character Assessment (2020)
- Dark Night Skies Technical Advice Note (2018)
- Ecosystem Services Technical Advice Note (2019)
- Roads in the South Downs (2015)

## 7. Planning Policy

7.1. The following policies of the **South Downs Local Plan 2014-2033** are relevant to this application:

- SD1 – Sustainable Development
- SD2 – Ecosystems Services
- SD4 – Landscape Character
- SD5 – Design
- SD6 – Safeguarding Views
- SD7 – Relative Tranquillity
- SD8 – Dark Night Skies
- SD9 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- SD10 – International Sites
- SD11 – Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- SD16 – Archaeology
- 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
- SD25 – Development Strategy
- SD26 – Supply of Homes
- SD27 – Mix of homes
- SD28 – Affordable Housing
- SD34 – Sustaining the Local Economy
- SD45 – Green Infrastructure
- SD48 – Climate Change and Sustainable Use of Resources
- SD49 – Flood Risk Management
- SD50 – Sustainable Drainage Systems
- SD54 – Pollution and Air Quality

7.2. The following policies of the **East Meon Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016-2032** are relevant to this application:

- EM1 – East Meon Housing Allocation to 2032
- EM2 – Settlement Policy Boundary
- EM3 – Size of Dwellings
- EM4 – Allocation of Affordable Housing
- EM5 – Protection of Valued Views
- EM6 – Layout and Form



- EM7 – Building Materials and Detailing
- EM8 – Outbuildings and Enclosure
- EM12 – Sewerage and Drainage
- EM13 – Surface Water Management
- EM16 – Land South of Coombe Road

## **8. Planning Assessment**

### Background

- 8.1. This planning application was submitted to the South Downs National Park Authority in January 2020. During the first round of consultation, a series of relevant consultees and third parties raised concerns with proposals. The most relevant issues raised related to harm to landscape character, insufficient surface water and foul water drainage strategies, the lack of affordable housing provision, an absent nitrates mitigation scheme, highway safety concerns with access arrangements as well as the overall layout and building design.
- 8.2. The scheme under consideration is the second formal submission under this application, although there were several informal revisions and feedback before. There has been engagement with the applicant and their project team, as well as with the Parish Council. This has enabled certain parameters of the scheme to be progressed.
- 8.3. Officers acknowledge the improvements that have been made and positive attributes of the proposal are summarised below. Furthermore, the layout and building design has evolved reducing some of the negative impacts of the initially proposed scheme.
  - Broad principles of the layout supported and consistent with the East Meon Neighbourhood Development Plan allocation policy;
  - Affordable housing provision;
  - Sustainable construction criteria;
  - Parking provision;
  - Architectural building design;
  - Nutrient neutrality mitigation scheme.
- 8.4. Whilst significant progress was made in some areas, officers advised that other areas were deficient to meet policy requirements.
- 8.5. A second consultation round was undertaken following receipt of revised layout and building plans and drainage proposals. This resulted in the responses outlined in section 4 of this report. The latest revised proposal is assessed below.
- 8.6. Although this is major development for the purposes of the Development Management Procedure Order (more than 10 dwellings), the proposal does not constitute major development for the purposes of the NPPF and Policy SD3 of the Local Plan.

### East Meon Neighbourhood Development Plan

- 8.7. The application site is allocated for residential development in Policy EM16 of the East Meon NDP; therefore, the principle of development is established. Policy EM16 of the NDP states that the land south of Coombe Road is allocated for 11 dwellings to include:
  - a) Two clusters of 6 and 5 dwellings, each served by their own access.
  - b) The mix of dwellings to comply with NDP.
  - c) No more than 2 storeys, no accommodation within the roof.
  - d) Public footway along frontage of site.
  - e) Wildlife corridor to be provided along south edge of site of 5 metres in depth.
  - f) Landscape and visual impact assessment appraisal to inform the design and layout of proposals.
  - g) Details of site levels, existing and proposed.
  - h) Detailed foul and surface water drainage strategy including Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS), to demonstrate how surface water drainage can be satisfactorily accommodated to, and, if practical and feasible, alleviate current problems in Coombe Road.

- i) Demonstrate that the development will not have an adverse impact on the quality of surface or groundwater.
  - j) An archaeological investigation.
- 8.8. The scheme proposed follows the general parameters of the NDP allocation policy, albeit with one extra dwelling. National and local planning policy seek to make an effective use of land. By adding an extra dwelling to the scheme, the proposal would maximise the planning benefit from a social point of view as it would maximise the provision of affordable housing. Whilst this represents a minor departure from the allocation policy concerning the amount of development, 12 units are considered to be acceptable, subject to compliance with the remaining policies of the development plan.
- 8.9. The NDP allocation policy includes layout design requirements (two clusters, two accesses, new footway and wildlife corridor) which are prescriptive and are included in an indicative layout in the supporting text of the policy. The layout in the NDP, whilst generally followed, has implications on how the scheme accords with other policies in the development plan. There is therefore some tension in trying to achieve all policy criteria but this is not unusual in particular where a scheme has been driven by a local community allocation which we have supported.
- 8.10. Initial design and landscape specialists advice resisted the two cluster/access layout as it could lead to negative effects on the character of the rural road and wider landscape, as well as it could reduce opportunities for high quality design. Alternative designs to the NDP layout were suggested by the Design Review Panel and other consultees. Notwithstanding, given the criteria in the NDP, there are implications on how a scheme will be assessed against Local Plan policies. Given that it is a NDP allocation, with specific criteria on how the community wish the site being developed, officers are giving this considerable weight and considered therefore that a full re-design was not required, but that a scheme should minimise harm on landscape and incorporate all opportunities to maximise benefits, as per the purposes of the Local Plan policies.
- 8.11. Officers are of the view that there is a scheme possible that follows the general design principles of the allocation policy whilst respecting local landscape character and comply with fundamental Local Plan policies. Unfortunately, this has not been demonstrated with the current scheme, as explained below.

#### Landscape and design

- 8.12. The application site is prominent on Coombe Road, which is a historic rural road. It is also elevated above Coombe Road and separated by a native hedgerow. The site and its edge contribute to the rural character of Coombe Road. It is located on the edge of the village, south of Coombe Road, where the rural character of the area is stronger due to the absence of development and continuous network of hedgerows along boundaries. It is also located within a slope that falls from Duncombe Farm to the south to Coombe Road to the north, taking significant surface water from neighbouring land. Surface water flooding is problem along Coombe Road.
- 8.13. Policies SD4 (Landscape character) and SD5 (Design) of the SDLP require any development proposal to adopt a landscape-led approach and respect the local character, through sensitive and high quality design that makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. Any proposal should also conserve and enhance landscape character. Policy SD5 requires development proposals to be demonstrably informed by an assessment of the landscape context, a contextual analysis that should include considerations, as relevant, depending on the particular context of each site. For this site, there are several relevant landscape considerations such topography, water, trees and hedgerows, edge of settlement and the rural road characters that need to be take into account.
- 8.14. The revised layout shows the majority of buildings located following the contours of the hill, with the exception of plots 3, 4, 11 and 12, which are positioned across. This is a departure from the settlement pattern where buildings are positioned parallel with the landform and routes, minimising the need for excavation and engineered changes to levels. From a landscape-led perspective, the proposal should aim to design sympathetically with the existing contours and respect the existing topography, where possible, demonstrating that

proposals respond to the context. It is not clear how much levelling would be required around plots 3, 4, 11 and 12. A change to landform is also proposed at the frontage, rear and accesses, where the 2 metres wide footway and 3 metres wide swales are proposed, and the ground would be excavated to a maximum of 1 metre and 5 metres in depth along the road. The above combination of changes to the natural topography of the site and levelling would be uncharacteristic of this location.

- 8.15. Furthermore, the proposed changes to the frontage of the site, by reason of the scale and appearance of engineering works (footway, swales, retaining walls and accesses) and loss of the existing hedgerow, would cause the suburbanisation of a rural road. The above represents the loss of the rural character of Coombe Road as a historic rural road would not be mitigated by the proposed replacement the hedgerow. The proposal will reduce the landscape value and character of the historic rural road.
- 8.16. The Landscape Officer has objected to the proposal as the drainage proposals were designed post-development and relies upon post-design engineering solutions. The landscape-led approach to design requires to consider water prior to designing any proposals. The purpose of this is to minimise harms and to maximise benefits to the landscape, including water management, ensuring that the development respects its contexts and makes a positive contribution to the landscape. There is concern that that the drainage proposals have been imposed upon a fixed design rather than opportunities for drainage actually informed a design.
- 8.17. The proposal has not demonstrated that the drainage strategy and design are technically feasible, as explained in sections below. It has also failed to demonstrate that drainage features can be accommodated within the site without causing harm to or loss of existing trees, compatibility with proposed planting, and that they are sympathetic to the character of the rural road.
- 8.18. Officers advised that the Local Plan requires any development to be landscape-led, which requires consideration of the landscape context and alignment as best as possible with other relevant policies of the Local Plan, as well as those in the NDP allocation criteria. The proposal adopts a design that responds to the NDP allocation criteria, but is considered to give insufficient consideration to some of the landscape-related policies of the Local Plan. All of the above aspects combined, and it is combination of factors rather than one per se, result in a scheme that does not sufficiently make a positive contribution to the area, and fails to integrate, respect and sympathetically complement the landscape of the locality. Notwithstanding the design parameters as set out in the NDP, it fails to conserve and enhance local landscape character.

#### Building design

- 8.19. Buildings are of a scale and appearance broadly consistent with the surrounding dwellings in the area. The building design has taken cues from buildings and forms in the area. They incorporate a variety of materials: flint, brick, timber, clay tiles and slate. These materials are widely present in East Meon and therefore contribute to local distinctiveness. Windows are of traditional size and to be made with timber. This is consistent with NDP Policy EM7.
- 8.20. The roof pitches of plots 11 and 12 differ from the 37-45 degree angle as required by Policy EM6 of the NDP. Notwithstanding this, the shallower pitch contributes to reduce the height of the building at the highest part of the site and is not incongruous in the area. Therefore, this departure is accepted.

#### Views

- 8.21. Policy EM5 of the East Meon NDP states that development must maintain the local character of the landscape and not cause adverse impact of significant views. These include viewpoints at high ground level on hills around the village such: viewpoint 2 from Park Hill and viewpoint 3 from Duncombe Farm, 200 metres south of the site. Other relevant vantage point is Coombe Road when approaching the site from the east and west and footpath no.7.
- 8.22. The application was accompanied with a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) when initially submitted, but this one was not revised alongside amended proposals. The Landscape Officer has raised concerns with the quality of the LVIA. Notwithstanding, having visited the site, it is considered that the proposed development would not be harmful to

long-distance views from north and south and protected viewpoints. It would however cause a significant impact to views from Coombe Road and especially, from the approach of the village from the west, given the site's prominence on this route. It would lead to visual harm caused by the suburbanisation of Coombe Road. The adverse impact to the character of the edge of the settlement and rural road as a result of the development at frontage would be clearly visible to road and footpath users.

- 8.23. Therefore, the proposal would fail to conserve and enhance the visual quality of the area and would be contrary to policies SD6 of the Local Plan and EM5 of the NDP.

#### Surface water drainage

- 8.24. Policy SD50 (Sustainable Drainage Systems or 'SuDS') of the Local Plan supports development proposals that ensure against the increase of surface water run-off, taking account of climate change. Furthermore, Policy SD49 states that proposals should not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere and, where possible, should reduce it.
- 8.25. Policies EM13 and EM16 of the NDP require new development to demonstrate that it will not increase the risk of flooding either to itself or other land. Surface water drainage should be satisfactorily accommodated to, and if practical and feasible, alleviate current problems in Coombe Road adjacent to the site. The East Meon NDP makes strong emphasis to surface water flooding, particularly in the Coombe Road area, due to the local concerns and history of flooding with heavy rains, which have affected dwellings in the area. It is clear from a site inspection in the winter that the site suffers from significant water run-off, which flows down the hill through the site to Coombe Road. New development within the site should not increase the risk of flooding in Coombe Road and surroundings, but should deal with surface water sustainably within the site and not cause flooding within the site/elsewhere, as well as if possible, reduce flood risks in the area.
- 8.26. This proposal was initially accompanied with a drainage strategy and design, which has been superseded during the life of the application and development increased to 12 units. The Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and the District Drainage Engineer were consulted and objected to the planning application.
- 8.27. The revised proposal, which is assessed below, includes swales (shallow and wide grass depressions) along the southern and northern boundaries, an attenuation pond and a network of soakaways and drainage pipes. It also includes two rain gardens.
- 8.28. The District Drainage Engineer and LLFA were consulted on the revised proposals and objected to the proposed development. The main concerns raised are:
- a) The submitted ground water winter monitoring test only took place for a week, rather than a prolonged time in the winter and there is no conclusive evidence of the absence of ground water below the base of the proposed soakaways to allow infiltration.
  - b) Detailed network calculations have not been provided. These are a simulation of the network's work and would demonstrate that the proposed drainage design can cope with all potential events of rainfall and deal with water successfully without flooding. In the absence of these calculations the feasibility of the system cannot be demonstrated.
  - c) The location of soakaways in close relation to buildings and trees may require amendment.
  - d) Flood flow routes in case of exceedance events suggest potential flooding of both vehicular and pedestrian accesses to the site, restricting access.
  - e) No information has been provided on how rainwater gardens will work effectively.
  - f) The culverts below the proposed accesses is too shallow and difficult to maintain.
  - g) Soakaways within rear gardens could have restricted access for maintenance.
- 8.29. The proposal suggests that surface water infiltration is feasible within the site and that no groundwater is encountered within the first 5 metres in depth. However, there is no compelling evidence demonstrating the absence of groundwater to the minimum depth required for the drainage design to be feasible. It is considered that further winter ground water monitoring would have benefited the assessment and that should have been provided. Appropriate infiltration of water in the ground through the proposed soakaways is not demonstrated to be feasible.

- 8.30. Furthermore, no hydraulic calculations have been submitted to demonstrate whether the proposed design (network of pipes, soakaways, swales and pond) actually work and successfully deal with surface water within the site. In the absence of these calculations, it is not demonstrated whether the proposed system and design works or not and if it would lead to any flood risk increase or not.
- 8.31. Other concerns with the drainage proposals relate to the two rain gardens, which do not seem to form part of the drainage design and to functionally contribute water management.
- 8.32. Regarding maintenance, officers are concerned with the complexity of the engineering solutions for the site and amount of underground pipework and soakaways and their location within private gardens, which could restrict access for maintenance. The District Drainage Engineer has also identified issues with the shallow height of the culverts below accesses to the site, as they would be difficult to maintain. The design should take account of the construction, operation and long-term maintenance of the surface and underground components of the drainage system.
- 8.33. The site presents an opportunity, given its location at the bottom of the hill to alleviate surface water problems in the area, not just avoid any increase in flooding in the area. This is one of the aims of the NDP allocation policy but this proposal has not considered nor demonstrated alleviating flooding elsewhere.
- 8.34. In light of the lack of sufficient robust information to demonstrate that drainage proposals are appropriate for the site and will satisfactorily deal with surface water, not resulting in flooding within site and elsewhere, the proposal is considered to contravene NDP policies EM13 and EM16, as well as policies SD49 and SD50 of the Local Plan.

#### Foul water drainage

- 8.35. The East Meon NDP Policy EM12 states that any new direct connection of new developments to the primary sewer network will not be supported unless it can be shown by rigorous analysis that there is sufficient capacity in the local sewerage system and that the new connection will not increase the risk of system back up/flooding.
- 8.36. At the time of allocating the site in the development of the NDP and in the life of this application, there was an awareness that the capacity of the local foul network is of local concern. Consequently, the NDP included Policy EM12. Ordinarily, the foul drainage system and network connection details are controlled by condition, should there not be concern with capacity in the network. Given the local concern and history of foul water flooding, officers have liaised with Southern Water, who operate the network, and they have confirmed that there is currently adequate capacity in the local network to accommodate foul flow from 12 new dwelling at the nearest manhole. The proposal to connect with a sewer to the public foul sewer manhole below Coombe Road is acceptable by the operator and would require their approval.

#### Highways safety, access and parking

- 8.37. The Highways Authority has raised an objection to the proposed development because of inadequate means of the access that would be detrimental to highway safety. This is due to the eastern access of the site being narrow and not allowing the passing of two vehicles. This is expected to lead to an unnecessary stopping or reversing onto Coombe Road of those using the eastern access, which serves 8 dwellings.
- 8.38. Furthermore, the Highways Authority raise that the submitted plans show that only regular cars would be able to access and manoeuvre within the site, but it has not demonstrated whether larger vehicles would be capable. No information has been provided on access and turning of fire and emergency vehicles and other large delivery vans. This is of particular importance given the tightness of the access and turning areas within the site.
- 8.39. A concern has also been raised by the District's Drainage Engineer regarding exceedance events and the flood flow routes indicated with the drainage plans. These show that the proposed vehicular and pedestrian accesses to the site would be restricted due to flooding of these areas in the case of an exceedance event. These are the only accesses available and could be flooded up to 257mm in depth. Exceedance events could potentially block access into and out of the site, which would lead to an unsafe access arrangement and blocking escape routes.

- 8.40. Officers have considered the relevant policies and NPPF regarding access to the site, as well as the advice given by consultees. Officers understand that a wide bell mouth type access with space allowing two vehicles to pass, as recommended by the Highways Authority, would be optimal in highways safety perspective. However, in the National Park and in sensitive locations such as this one, access proposals should also conserve and enhance the road's rural character while being safe to road users.
- 8.41. A single vehicle wide access is considered to be more appropriate than other alternatives for two vehicles' wide accesses given the location of the site and potential suburbanisation effect of a significantly wider and engineered bell mouth access. Having considered the Highways Authority's comments, officers consider that, on balance, the overall single car width of the accesses are appropriate.
- 8.42. Notwithstanding the above, officers agree that the proposal has not demonstrated that safe and suitable access would be provided for larger and emergency vehicles. Also, the potential eventual flooding of both accesses would lead to a site with no vehicular and pedestrian means of access and escape. This is of particular concern for people who are less mobile.
- 8.43. In light of the above, the proposal has failed to demonstrate the continued safe and efficient operation of the access, as well as the efficient delivery of goods and access by service and emergency vehicles. Consequently, the proposal is found contrary to policies SD19 and SD21 of the Local Plan

#### Parking

- 8.44. With regards to parking, the proposal shows a total of 28 parking spaces, 25 spaces for residents and 3 for visitors, which is compliant with the parking demand according to the emerging Parking SPD calculator. Parking is of a mixed arrangement of uncovered tandem parking, car barn and two single garages.

#### Trees

- 8.45. Policy SD11 of the Local Plan permits development proposals where they conserve and enhance trees and hedgerows. Proposals that affect these must demonstrate that they have been informed by a full site survey and tree protection plan. Policy SD11 also requires proposals to avoid loss or damage of non-protected trees or hedgerows, and if demonstrated as being unavoidable, appropriate replacement or compensation will be required. It also requires to provide adequate protection to trees and to prevent damage to root systems.
- 8.46. The Tree Officer was consulted on this planning application initially and later when revised plans were submitted and both times concerns were raised with regards to the impact of the development on mature trees on the western and eastern boundaries. Information was requested: surveys and protection plans demonstrating that no harm would be caused to trees. These are required prior determination and have not been submitted.
- 8.47. The NDP acknowledges the reliance of the development in the existing and proposed trees in order to integrate the development in the landscape context. Trees along the eastern boundary appear to be located outside of the application site and in different ownership.
- 8.48. The proposed plans show that some buildings would be located in relative close proximity to trees within boundaries and to be retained. The significant changes to existing ground levels along the frontage to facilitate new swales and footpath would also likely impact trees and hedgerow along the north east corner. Of concern is the proposed drainage design and implications that the proposed extensive pipework and soakaways would have on existing mature trees. Soakaways no. 1 and 3 would be located in very close distance to trees, which root system would be likely be damaged, as soakaways would be dug 4.6 and 5.3 metres in depth and would be approximately 3 metres in diameter.
- 8.49. It is understood that the retention of the hedgerow along the north boundary would be difficult and a justification has been given for its loss and replacement. However, mature trees are unlikely to be retained and protected from harm, given the proposed layout and drainage design. Therefore, the proposal is found contrary to Policy SD11 of the Local Plan.

#### Affordable housing and housing mix

- 8.50. The East Meon NDP requires all housing proposals to provide a mix of size of units: 50% 2-bedroom and 50% 3-bedroom dwellings. The proposed development will contribute with four 3-bed units and eight 2-bed units, which amounts to a 33% of 3-beds and 67% of 2-bedroom units. The proposed mix would represent a slight departure from the NDP percentages, but in light of Policy SD27 of the Local Plan, which identifies a high need for smaller homes in the National Park, a higher provision of smaller (2-bed) dwellings is considered acceptable.
- 8.51. Policy SD28 of the Local Plan requires a minimum of 50% of new homes to be affordable homes on-site in perpetuity, a minimum of 75% should be of rented affordable tenure. The latest revision of the proposal meets the above requirements with 6 affordable dwellings, of which 4 flats are of social rent. An affordable housing on-site provision could be secured via a Section 106 agreement.
- 8.52. Overall, proposals are considered to comply with the mix and affordability requirements of the development plan, but in the absence of a secured obligation in a Section 106 agreement, refusal on this is proposed.

#### Impact on amenity of local residents

- 8.53. The site is located in proximity to residential properties immediately north of Coombe Road. Concern has been raised by the neighbours with regards to potential loss of light, loss of privacy and feeling of overbearing. Policy SD5 of the Local Plan requires new development to have regard to avoiding harmful impact upon, or from, any surrounding uses and amenities.
- 8.54. Buildings are arranged in a manner that they face the road, not directly addressing nearby neighbours. Notwithstanding this, the dwellings along the frontage would be opposite other properties across the road, approximately between 20 and 26 metres away from these. This is considered a significant distance, especially given the feeling of separation with boundary treatments and a road in between. The proposed buildings' height has been reduced to a maximum of approximately 8 metres, albeit in an elevated position. Given the separation distances and the disposition of neighbouring windows there would be not harmful impact on the daylight received by, or outlook from, neighbouring properties.

#### Sustainable construction

- 8.55. The latest revision has been accompanied with a Sustainability Statement, which confirms that the development would meet the requirements set out in the Sustainable Construction SPD and Policy SD48 of the Local Plan.
- 8.56. Clarification was sought by consultees regarding electric vehicle charging points and the amount of green roofs and whether these meet the SPD requirements. Following this, it has been confirmed that charging points will be available to all dwellings, as shown on plans. Concerning green roofs, it is considered that the proposed large car barn would be appropriate and no further green roofs would be required.

#### Ecology and biodiversity net gain

- 8.57. Policy SD9 of the Local Plan requires proposals to demonstrate that they conserve and enhance biodiversity as well as have identified and incorporated opportunities for net gains in biodiversity. The County ecologist has not raised any concerns. Net gain could be achieved through the landscape scheme primarily through the proposed south edge wildlife coring and bat and bird boxes via conditions. Therefore, no concerns are raised in regard to net gain and safeguarding protected species.

#### Impact on internationally designated conservation sites

- 8.58. The Solent is internationally important for its wildlife and is subject to several European nature conservation designations. It has been identified that the proposed development could adversely affect European nature conservation designations of the Solent. One of the main potential impacts identified is the likely contribution of the development to the eutrophication of water in the Solent. This process occurs when a body of water becomes overly enriched with nutrients, which may result in oxygen depletion of the water and a subsequent adverse effect to species that depend on this habitat. Natural England guidance

issued in 2019 outlines that it needs to achieve 'nitrate neutrality' in order to not have a likely significant adverse effect upon these protected areas.

- 8.59. In order to address the issue of nutrient neutrality an area of arable land to the south-west will be removed from cereal production and planted as woodland. Natural England and the County Ecologist have commented favourably and raise no objection subject to the mitigation scheme being secured in a planning obligation. However, in the absence of a secured obligation in a Section 106 agreement, refusal on this is proposed.

#### Archaeology

- 8.60. Policy EM16 of the NDP requires the application to be accompanied by a desk based archaeological investigation, which has been submitted. Following consultation with the County Archaeologist, and in the absence of concerns, the proposal would not be expected to cause harm to any heritage asset. Pre-commencement conditions have been recommended. In light of the above, the proposal is consistent with Archaeology Policy SD16 of the Local Plan.

#### Other matters

- 8.61. No light pollution is expected as result of the proposed development as external lighting is not proposed and could be controlled by condition and internal light transmission would be minimal given that most openings would not face upwards or the open countryside. The proposal has demonstrated that the dark night skies will be conserved on site and therefore its compliance with Policy SD8 of the Local Plan.
- 8.62. The scheme would be CIL liable as new residential development is proposed.

### **9. Conclusion**

- 9.1. The proposed development is acceptable in principle insofar as the site is allocated for housing in the East Meon NDP. The assessment outlined in this report has concluded that there are concerns regarding the management of surface water within the site, as drainage proposals have not demonstrated to be technically feasible and landscape-led. The scheme meets many of the allocation policy requirements and is broadly in line with the layout requisites of the NDP; however, for the reasons above it results in harm to local landscape and does not accord with policies SD2, SD4, SD5, SD11 and SD21 of the Local Plan.
- 9.2. The scheme also does not accord with policies SD19 and SD21 as it has not demonstrated a safe and effective access to the site.
- 9.3. Other requirements in regard to a Section 106 agreement have also been outlined in a reason for refusal.

### **10. Reason for Recommendation**

- 10.1. Planning permission is recommended to be refused for the following reasons:
1. The proposal, by reason of its scale and design, fails to conserve and enhance landscape character. In particular, the proposed changes to ground levels and engineered solutions along the frontage of the site would result in an unacceptably suburban form of development that would fail to contribute to local distinctiveness and integrate with and respect local character in this part of the National Park. Moreover, the proposal fails to adequately protect trees. The proposed development is therefore contrary to policies SD1, SD4, SD5, SD6, SD11 and SD21 of the South Downs Local Plan 2014-2033, policies EM5, EM6 and EM16 of the East Meon Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016-2032, the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 and the First Purpose of the National Park.
  2. Insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the drainage proposals incorporate a satisfactory means of managing surface water sustainably and that the development would not result in flood risk within the site or elsewhere. The proposals are therefore contrary to policies SD2, SD49 and SD50 of the South Downs Local Plan 2014-2033, policies EM13 and EM16 of the East Meon Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016-2032 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2019.
  3. Insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the development would not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety and the continued safe and efficient operation of the road network. Particularly, the applicant has not demonstrated that the



access and layout are adequate for large delivery, firefighting and emergency vehicles. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies SD19 and SD21 of the South Downs Local Plan 2014-2033 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2019.

4. In the absence of a completed Section 106 Legal Agreement to secure the following:
- An on-site affordable housing contribution of 50% of dwellings;
  - A scheme of mitigation towards nutrient neutrality of water in the Solent protected areas,

the proposals fail to secure a level, mix and tenure of onsite affordable housing that would accord with policy SD27 and SD28 and to mitigate against its direct impacts and does not satisfy policies SD1, SD9, SD10 and SD17 of the South Downs Local Plan 2014-2033, National Park Purposes and statutory duty of a National Park.

## **11. Crime and Disorder Implication**

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. In reaching this decision the Local Planning Authority has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive way, in line with the NPPF. This has included the provision of advice from the SDNPA Senior Development Management Officer, Landscape and Design Officers, the opportunity to provide additional information and revisions to the proposal for the purposes of adding value and address concerns with the proposals.

## **TIM SLANEY**

### **Director of Planning**

### **South Downs National Park Authority**

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Appendices	I. Site Location Map
SDNPA Consultees	Legal services
Background Documents	Planning application (documents, representations and consultation responses) <a href="https://planningpublicaccess.southdowns.gov.uk/online-applications/simpleSearchResults.do?action=firstPage">https://planningpublicaccess.southdowns.gov.uk/online-applications/simpleSearchResults.do?action=firstPage</a> South Downs Local Plan 2014-2033 <a href="https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/south-downs-local-plan_2019/">https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/south-downs-local-plan_2019/</a> East Meon Neighbourhood Development Plan (2016) <a href="https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/EAST-MEON-Made-NDP.pdf">https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/EAST-MEON-Made-NDP.pdf</a> National Planning Policy Framework (2019) <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2</a> The South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan (2020-2025)

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/partnership-management-plan/>

English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular (2010):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-national-parks-and-the-broads-uk-government-vision-and-circular-2010>

South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2020)

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/landscape-design-conservation/south-downs-landscape-character-assessment/south-downs-landscape-character-assessment-2020/>

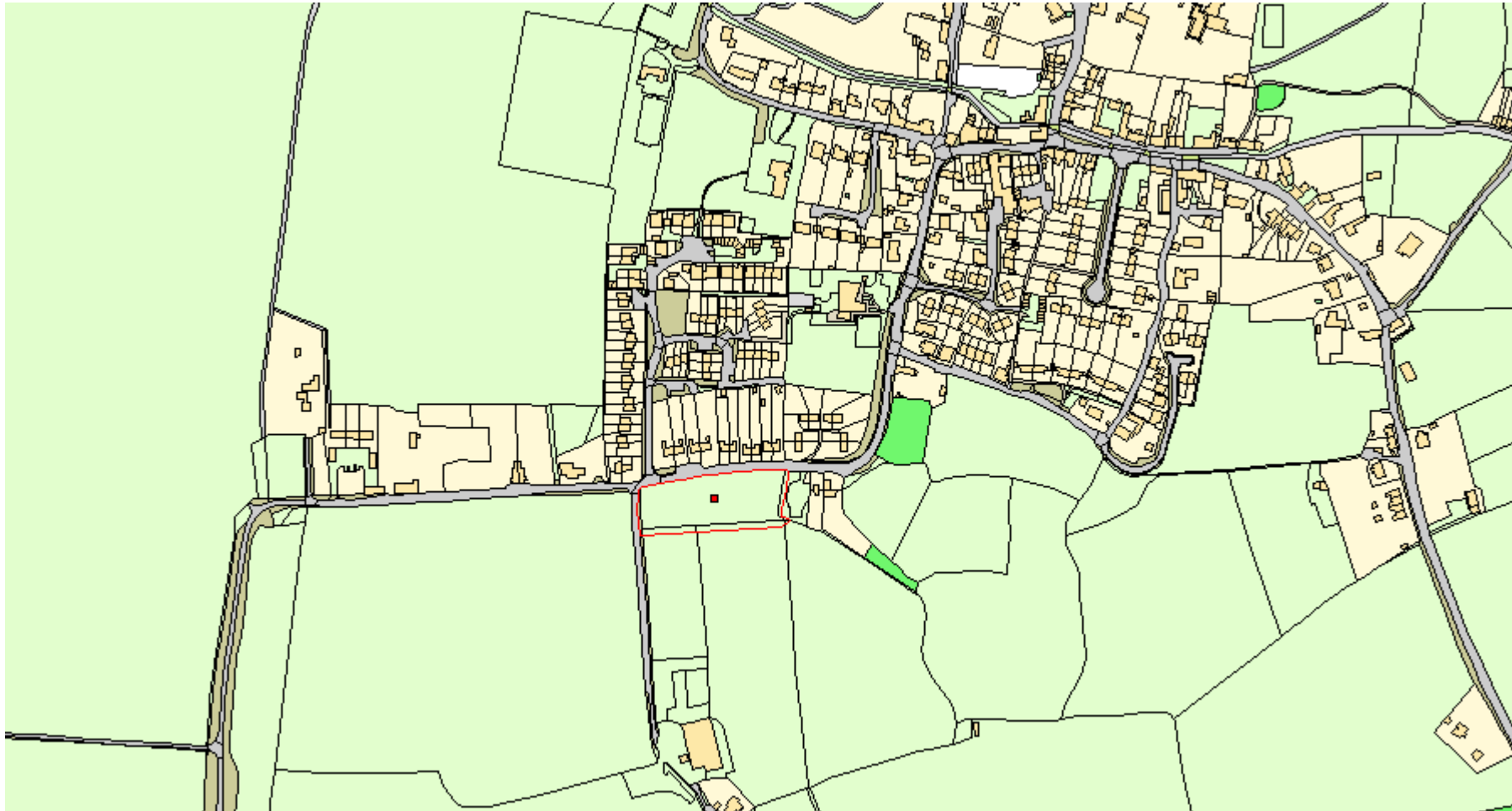
SDNPA Technical Advice Notes

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents/technical-advice-notes-tans/>

Roads in the South Downs (2015)

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Roads-in-the-South-Downs.pdf>

**Site Location Map**



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