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Our Ref: SDNP/17/05087/PRE
Contact Officer: Richard Ferguson
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Dear Alison Young

PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

Proposal: **Redevelopment of the site to residential with three options currently under consideration:**
Option A - 39 unit scheme (houses) and care home
Option B - 65 unit scheme including flats
Option C - 59 unit scheme (all houses)
The existing access would be retained and open space would be provided on-site for residents.

Site Address: **Liss Forest Nursery, Petersfield Road, Greatham, Liss, Hampshire, GU33 6HA**

Thank you for your correspondence received 5 October 2017 seeking pre-application advice.

Executive Summary

The site is a draft allocation comprising of 40 dwellings and a local shop in the Pre-submission draft of the South Downs Local Plan. The Submission version is due to be published at the end of March which will gather further weight in decision making. At present, the Joint Core Strategy has primacy in the Development Plan until the Local Plan is adopted. Some weight can be given to emerging policies however until they are adopted the principle of development is less certain. Should a proposal be submitted before the adoption of the SDNP Local Plan, it is advisable to set out how it accords with the emerging Local Plan, importantly including affordable housing provision. The proposed scheme should adopt a landscape-led approach and we encourage that further engagement with the SDNPA is undertaken through attending a session with the Design Review Panel once you have undertaken various assessments, such as a Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal, to inform the design and initial concept drawings have been prepared.

Planning Policy

The adopted Development Plan is the saved policies of the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Second Review 2006 and the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy 2014 (JCS).

The saved policies of the 2006 Local Plan

The policies highlighted in the appendix should be considered. These are reasonably dated and pre-date the National Park and the NPPF. Whilst forming part of the development Plan, given the policy considerations below I recommend focussing on the JCS and emerging Local Plan policies.

The Joint Core Strategy

The Joint Core Strategy currently has primacy over the saved policies of the 2006 Local Plan and the SDNP draft Local Plan. The expectation of new housing in the National Park is a focus on affordable housing. Given the site is outside of a settlement policy boundary, policies CPI4 and CPI9 would apply. This relates to rural exception schemes which requires a minimum of 70% affordable housing, but I do not wish to comment on this type of scheme following our discussion. Policy CP20 addresses landscape considerations and will be a key policy from which to assess the application. Its various criteria align with draft SDNP Local Plan policies and these should inform the design approach to any future scheme.

SDNPA emerging Local Plan

The SDNPA's draft Local Plan is progressing and the public consultation for the Pre-submission version finished on the 21st November 2017. It is anticipated that the Submission Version of the Local Plan will be submitted for independent examination in March 2018.

Draft policy SD73 of the SDNP Local Plan allocates the site for residential development for between 35-40 dwellings, associated open space and a shop unit up to 280sqm and parking. There is a range of considerations within the draft policy which proposals would need to accord with. This draft policy is considered in more detail in the planning assessment section.

Paragraph 216 of the NPPF allows for weight to be given to emerging Local Plans depending on the circumstances. In this instance, the Pre-Submission version furthers the policies of the Preferred Options draft (2015), however, the JCS should be given primacy in decision making given it is a relatively recent Plan, it post-dates the NPPF and the designation of the National Park and it is a joint plan between EHDC and the SDNPA.

Therefore, the site's status as a proposed draft allocation in the SDNP Local Plan only has some weight and, at this stage, it does not outweigh the JCS. Therefore, the principle of development for an open market residential scheme is arguably not yet established. However, the Submission version of the Local Plan is due to be submitted to the Secretary of State by the end of March and would likely be a consideration in any future application. This version of the Local Plan will have further weight compared to the Pre-submission version in decision making.

If proposals were submitted prior to the adoption of the SDNP Local Plan, the JCS still has primacy from which to assess the application and in this respect the principle of development has not been fully established, but an on balance recommendation may be considered provided a strong case and well considered scheme is presented which does not solely rely on policy SD73. In other words, the scheme must not ignore or 'cherry pick' other draft policies which should also be afforded weight. Also, the Submission version of the Local Plan is likely to be published before any decision on an application. I would therefore recommend that a scheme addresses a wide range of emerging policy considerations such as housing mix and meeting need, an appropriate amount and tenure of affordable housing, and importantly an eco-systems services approach and a landscape-led design. An eco-systems services approach is explained in the draft Local Plan.

Major Development

The proposals, or indeed a smaller scale of development in line with the allocation of 35-40 dwellings, would be considered as major development and so paragraph 116 of the NPPF will apply. Whilst the site is a proposed housing allocation, proposals would be expected to address this policy, which also align with emerging policy SD2 of the SDNP draft Local Plan.

Five year housing land supply

The Authority's Annual Monitoring Report was published in December 2017. It demonstrates that the Authority has a robust housing land supply across the National Park both against the proposed provision in the draft Local Plan and in the Joint Core Strategy. Importantly, paragraphs 49 and 14 of the NPPF are clear that the Authority is not obliged to meet objectively assessed need in full where this would give rise to conflict with other policies, in this case paragraphs 115 and 116 of the NPPF. The need should only be met insofar as it is consistent with restrictive policies. The housing requirement in the draft SDNP Local Plan has been moderated by landscape considerations which have strongly influenced the overall housing requirement, housing allocations for settlements and the identification of sites.

Planning Assessment

In regard to the various development options, the provision of a care home in the location could be contrary to JCS policy and would be contrary to the draft allocation for the site. The facility plus c.40 dwellings may also be an overdevelopment of the site considering its rural context and character of Greatham. A wholly residential scheme is therefore likely to be the preferred approach to developing this site, as discussed.

The submitted development options of a 59 and 65 dwelling schemes are obviously significantly larger than the 35-40 range proposed in the draft Local Plan. The 35-40 dwelling range was reached through an assessment of the site and in the context of the emerging Spatial Strategy in the Local Plan for new housing. Taking into consideration this work, the concept schemes, the character of Greatham and the surrounding landscape it is likely that 59-65 dwelling schemes would be an unacceptable scale of development. As discussed, the care home proposals would also not be appropriate in light of the draft allocation and current planning policies.

Turning to the proposed shop, the draft policy is being considered through the Local Plan process and the representations which have been received. Clear justification will be needed if future proposals don't include it and the Submission version of the Local Plan still includes it. Emerging policy SD73 includes other criteria (letters a-i) which are addressed in more detail below.

In regard to the retention of the existing business, there are policies in the draft Local Plan which seek to retain existing employment sites and uses. However, the merits of the site are being considered through the Local Plan process for housing and in this regard the loss of nurseries may not be a significant issue.

Housing need and mix

The SDNPA's SHMA offers the latest assessment of housing need within the National Park. It outlines a predominant need for 2 and 3 bedroom open market properties and 1 and 2 bed affordable homes. The SHMA has informed SDNP draft policy SD27 regarding the future mix of dwellings in new developments. JCS policy CPI 1 is less specific about mix, it states development needs to provide a range of dwelling tenures, types and sizes to meet housing need. It may therefore be prudent to adopt the approach in SD27 given it is underpinned by more up to date evidence and in light of the comments in the policy section.

In regard to affordable housing, EHDC's housing department have responded with an outline of identified housing need which is included in their response online. I recommend this is considered in regard to the affordable housing element of a future scheme.

Policy CPI 3 of the Joint Core Strategy outlines a target of 40% affordable housing contribution on site. Policy SD28 of the draft Local Plan requires that all new residential developments of 11 dwellings or more (gross) provide a minimum of 50% affordable housing, 75% of which to be affordable rented tenure. Only in exceptional cases should developments deviate from this. In regard to viability and providing affordable housing on site, please see pages 131-134 of the Pre-submission draft Local Plan for the Authority's position on delivering affordable housing. As above, if an application is to be considered favourably ahead of the Local Plan being adopted the draft policies should be considered in full and I would recommend focussing on policy SD28.

In regard to the approach within the design, an approach of small clusters of affordable housing throughout the scheme could be acceptable. I would recommend early discussions with Registered Providers to understand their requirements and interest in the site. These dwellings should also be designed so as they are indistinguishable from the open market properties and, as with all dwellings, meet national space standards and lifetime homes standards.

Landscape and design

Firstly, to aid in the development of a scheme, we would like to offer a session with the SDNPA's Design Review Panel, as part of the pre-application service. I would encourage that this resource is used at the outset of your proposals. The DRP should be used at the concept stage to help inform the design rather than presenting a finished scheme. It is likely that the DRP would be used during the course of an application to help evaluate the design. The DRP meetings occur on the third Thursday of every month at the SDNPA offices.

A key aspect is to outline a vision and objectives for the site at an early outset. The eventual proposed design needs to be justified through a coherent rationale for how it has been reached. It is important to establish an overall vision for the site and provide evidence of an analysis and the steps you have gone through to achieve this. Ultimately, the SDNPA is looking for a landscape-led approach whereby the scheme is informed by a Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal. This should be undertaken at the outset alongside other surveys to establish the constraints and opportunities which the site presents.

The scheme should also be underpinned by an Eco-systems services approach, which is policy SD2 in the draft Local Plan. The potential environmental benefits to be incorporated into the scheme are highlighted by the symbols at the top of policy SD73. These aspects could be explored further through a session with our Design Review Panel.

The proposals show a non-descript suburban development. A sense of place needs to be instilled within the scheme. This may be achieved in ways of the layout, public realm, scale, appearance and materials of properties and public open space. Green infrastructure will also be important in terms of using native species and opportunities for it to connect with surrounding vegetation. It will be important to retain the trees along the south west boundary. I recommend considering what vegetation around the site boundaries is worth retaining and where enhancements can be made.

The design of the dwellings

It is considered that houses would be more appropriate than flats. The dwellings should at least meet the minimum national space standards. I recommend considering what the local vernacular and positive precedents are in the village but the SDNPA would not rule out a contemporary approach, which could make reference to those positive precedents, provided evidence of an analysis and rationale for this approach can be shown.

Ecology and trees

I understand that an ecological assessment of the site was commissioned. I would encourage an initial phase I survey to be undertaken to understand the ecological potential of the site. Consideration needs to be given to potential impacts upon the Wealden Heaths SPA and Woolmer Forest SAC. Policy CP22 of the JCS is relevant in this regard. This also relates to criterion (c) in draft policy SD73. As the site is outside of the 400m buffer, it is relatively less sensitive but still high and a form of mitigation may be required depending on Natural England's advice. Without prejudging their advice, it may be that the mitigation could include a financial contribution towards improving other amenities/facilities nearby and/or providing appropriate public open space on site. A Habitats Regulations Assessment may be required however I would recommend you seek advice on this from Natural England.

A tree survey is likely to be required. The mature trees on the south west boundary should be retained wherever possible. This could accord with criterion (i) in draft policy SD73.

Highways and access

Criterion (f) of SD73 seeks to retain the existing vehicular access. Having visited the site, this appears to be the most practical and in regard to impacts upon the character and appearance of the area may not involve more extensive engineering compared to further along Petersfield Road where the site is on much higher ground to the road.

In regard to parking, East Hampshire parking standards should apply. Draft policy SD22 also outlines provision for electric vehicle charging provision as well, wherever feasible.

The scheme should consider how it can improve links through the site to the public right of way to the east. Please see criterion (g) in SD73.

As discussed, it is important at the outset of designing a scheme to determine whether internal roads/pavements would be offered for adoption or become the responsibility of a management company. If the latter approach was progressed, this would offer more scope in regard to the public realm within the scheme. A landscape scheme should also take into account visibility at any junctions within the development and the access onto Petersfield Road.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The development would be CIL liable. The Authority's CIL charging scheme is available on line. The applicable CIL charges is £200 per sqm.

I would recommend preparing the following:

Arboricultural Impact Assessment
Archaeological assessment
Flood Risk Assessment
Heritage Statement
Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal
Minerals Assessment report
Geo-technical Site Investigation report, with percolation tests

Consultations

Ecology and trees

An application would need to be accompanied by an ecological assessment. I understand that this is already being undertaken. Subject to its findings, I would recommend that any future scheme also examines ways to enhance biodiversity opportunities on site.

Natural England - the site would be in close proximity to the Wealden Heaths SPA. I would advise that you consult with Natural England directly to understand what would be required in regard to assessments and any mitigation.

HCC Public right of way

No objection in principle but would expect a suitable green buffer around the PROW to conser its amenity and biodiversity value.

Would expect the proposals to provide pedestrian links from the development to the PROW.

HCC are requiring a contribution towards the PROW network in response to any increased footfall from new residents. This may be covered by CIL however.

Flooding/surface water

The site is located in Flood Zone 1 (low probability of flooding) and I am not aware of any historic flooding issues affecting the site. The proposals will generate increased run-off which must be controlled on site and not increase flood risk elsewhere. The underlying ground conditions are likely to be sandstone, which may not be suitable for conventional SUDS techniques. Any subsequent planning application should include a geotechnical site investigation with site percolation tests to BRE 365.

Highways

Hampshire County Council have provided generalised advice in regard to visibility splays and that a scheme should meet adopted parking standards. They have advised that visibility should meet standards set out in Manual for Streets for visibility splays on 30mph roads, which are 2.4m x 43m. They have advised that any further detailed advice would be subject to their pre-application charging scheme. I would recommend that further advice is sought from them in due course.

If you pursue a formal planning application please note that the requirements of the South Downs National Park Authority Local Validation List will apply with regard to the information required to be submitted. Further information is available at <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/making-an-application/local-validation-list/> .

It would be advisable to contact the Building Control department at your Local Authority to check if building regulation approval is required.

Please note that the advice contained within this letter constitutes an informal Officers opinion and does not prejudice, nor is binding upon, any future decision taken by the South Downs National Park Authority.

Yours faithfully,

Richard Ferguson
Development Management Lead (Western Area)
For and on behalf of South Downs National Park

Appendix

National Park Purposes

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 well being of the local community in pursuit of these purposes.

Partnership Management Plan

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.

The following Policies and Outcomes are of particular relevance to this case:

- General Policy 1
- General Policy 2
- General Policy 3
- General Policy 4
- General Policy 5
- General Policy 9

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Circular 2010

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 on 27 March 2012. The Circular and NPPF confirm that National Parks have the highest status of protection and the NPPF states at paragraph 115 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.

Development Plan

The development plan policies listed below have been assessed for their compliance with the NPPF and are considered to be compliant with the NPPF.

The following policies of the **East Hampshire District Local Plan: 2nd Revision 2006** are relevant to this application:

The following policies of the **East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy** are relevant to this application:

- CPI - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CP2 - Spatial Strategy
- CP10 - Spatial Strategy for Housing
- CP11 - Housing Tenure, Type and Mix
- CP14 - Affordable Housing for Rural Communities
- CP18 - Provision of Open Space, Sport and Recreation and Built Facilities
- CP19 - Development in the Countryside
- CP20 - Landscape
- CP21 - Biodiversity
- CP22 - Internationally Designated Sites
- CP24 - Sustainable Construction
- CP28 - Green Infrastructure
- CP29 - Design
- CP31 - Transport

Other plans considered

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The Draft South Downs National Park Local Plan

The South Downs Local Plan: Pre-Submission 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. After this period, the next stage in the plan preparation will be the submission of the Local Plan for independent examination and thereafter adoption. Until this time, the Pre-Submission Local Plan is a material consideration in the assessment of this planning application in accordance with paragraph 216 of the NPPF, which confirms that weight may be given to policies in emerging plans following publication unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. Based on the current stage of preparation, along with the fact that the policies are compliant with the NPPF, the policies within the Pre-Submission Local Plan referenced are currently afforded some weight.

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