

**Agenda Item 7**  
**Report PC23/24-30**

Report to **Planning Committee**  
Date **11 April 2024**  
By **Director of Planning**  
Local Authority **East Hants District Council**  
Application Number **SDNP/23/03766/FUL**  
Applicant **Wilson Designer Homes**  
Application **Erection of 9 dwellings, access, parking, landscaping, and associated works following site clearance and preparation. (Revised Plans)**  
Address **Land South of Church Road Steep, Petersfield Hampshire**

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**Recommendation:**

- 1) That planning permission be granted subject to:
    - i) **A S106 legal agreement, the final form of which is delegated to the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Chairman of the Planning Committee, to secure:**
      - **3 x 2bed Affordable Housing Units**
      - **Informal public open space management scheme**
      - **BNG enhancement scheme**
    - ii) **The conditions set out in paragraph 9 of the report**
  - 2) **That authority be delegated to the Director of Planning to refuse Planning Permission, with appropriate reasons, if the legal agreement is not completed, or insufficient progress made, within six months of the 11 April 2024 Planning Committee meeting.**
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Site Location Map



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## Executive Summary

### Key Matters

- Land to the South of Church Road, Steep is allocated for residential development for between 8 and 12 dwellings as set out within Policy SD89 of the adopted Local Plan.
- The site allocation is split between two landowners. This application only relates to part of the allocation, the larger, eastern portion which is currently owned by Steep In Need. The full site allocation is roughly a reverse 'L' shape and the southwestern portion is owned by Steep Village Hall and excluded from the red line plan relating to this application. The whole allocation is 0.7 hectares, and the application site is 0.57 hectares.
- Paragraph 9.240 of the Local Plan notes that 'proposals should provide approximately 20% of the total area as informal public open space accessible from the village hall and car park. Approximately 16% of the public open space is provided as a 'Green' and approximately 18% a publicly accessible biodiversity space. Both are accessible from the Village Hall and car park.
- The scale and design and layout of the scheme is acceptable insofar as it respects character and settlement pattern of Steep whilst also achieving the quantum of development as set out within the site allocation. Ecosystems services measures and a portion of BNG is achieved on site, additional Off-site BNG to be provided. A SUDs and swale scheme is also proposed to manage surface water.
- The scheme is acceptable regarding matters such as design, materials, highway safety, parking, impact on surrounding amenities, setting of heritage assets, affordable housing, mix of units, trees and dark night skies. In all of these respects, the scheme accords with the relevant Local Plan policies as well as National Park Purposes and Duty.
- The scheme is before members because it is a sensitive site allocation and also due to the level of objections raised in relation to the proposal.

### **I. Site Description**

- I.1 The site is situated within the settlement boundary of Steep. It is broadly square in shape and extends to approximately 0.57 ha. The site is bordered by a single residential property to the east and the Steep Village Hall to the west. The northern boundary aligns with Church Road, which has existing residential development on its northern side and directly opposite the site. The land to the south forms part of the Bedales School site. There is an existing gateway onto the site opposite the junction with Church Road and Mill Lane, however this is simply a field access gate.
- I.2 The land is off Church Road, which runs from the west to east from Bell Hill road, (which leads out of Petersfield and up to the Hangers), through Steep and down past The Harrow Public House until it joins Waterworks Road and crosses the A3.
- I.3 The site comprises an existing field which is bounded by mature hedgerows. The hedgerow bordering the northern boundary with the road is regularly trimmed to approximately 1/5 metres above ground, on the pavement side. The hedges boarding the east, south and west boardings of the site have been allowed to grow in an unrestrained shape and contain numerous mature trees. The western boundary of the site, alongside the Village Hall is subject to a TPO.
- I.4 There is an existing open ditch network on the perimeter of the site and a further ditch which runs down through the western side of the site. The site slopes from its northern boundary with Church Road, down to the ditch along its southern boundary, in wet weather this ditch feeds the lake in the grounds of Bedales school.
- I.5 There are no environmental designations or constraints on the site. However, a listed War Memorial is situated opposite the site at the junction of Church Road and Mill Lane and the site is within the 2km Dark Skies Buffer Zone. The site is wholly within Flood Zone 1 of the Environment Agency's Flood Risk Mapping.

## 2. Relevant Planning History

- 2.1 The site is allocated as SD89 in the Local Plan and pre application discussions occurred under references SDNP/21/05912/PRE (withdrawn) and SDNP/22/05378/PRE (written advice issued). The executive summary of the pre application response advised that; the principle of residential development for 9 dwellings on the site (redline boundary the same as this application) was acceptable and the level of community engagement was noted, but that a successful proposal must be compliant with policy.

## 3. Proposals

- 3.1 During the course of the application the proposals were revised to split Plot 8 from one large 4-bedroom property into 2 x semi-detached 3 bed units, taking the total number of units on site to 9. The proposed mix is now 3 x 2 bed affordable housing units, 1 x 2 bed Market Housing, 3 x 3 bed Market Housing and 2 x 4 Bed Market Housing.
- 3.2 New Vehicular and pedestrian access is proposed to the eastern side of the site from Church Road. Additionally, 2 new pedestrian accesses are being created from the existing pavement. One of these is a new, 1.6-metre-wide opening created through the existing hedge. The other is the widening of the existing field access gate from approximately 2 metres to approximately 4 metres. An additional, curved, third pedestrian access is proposed to connect with the envisaged footpath from the Village Hall car park. If the Village Hall proposals (which are on land controlled by a third party) do not come forward, there will still be a connection from the application site to the Village Hall Car Park, albeit an informal, rather than regularised one.
- 3.3 Part of the proposals is the creation of a new 'Green', as described by the applicant on their submitted drawings. This will be to the front (northern end) of the site, immediately to the South of Church Road. The shape of this is roughly triangular. During the course of the application changes have been made to this space, it has been slightly widened, part of the existing hedgerow is now retained, the remainder is removed to achieve visibility splays and a new hedge will be planted behind this line. Additionally, a swale has been added along the southern boundary of this space. This swale joins with the proposed swale which runs north to south along the eastern boundary line of plots 5 and 9.
- 3.4 4 of the proposed properties front onto this proposed green, 3 of which are the affordable units and 1 of which is a 2-bedroom unit. The other property which 'fronts' the road is a 3-bedroom unit which, during the course of the application has been rotated to better align with the road. The remaining units are to the south of the new access road. Plots 6 and 7 are 4 bed units and plots 8 and 9 are 2x 3 bed semi-detached properties.
- 3.5 A 'biodiversity park' will be created along the western side of the new western most swale, which will connect to a strip of land which runs along the southern boundaries of the gardens of plots 6,7, 8 and 9. During the course of the application the boundaries of these proposed gardens have been moved northwards, to allow this additional open space to be created and connected to the originally proposed biodiversity area. It is envisaged (and will be conditioned) that the ends of the gardens to these plots will be enclosed by open post and rail fencing.
- 3.6 The application proposes 20 car parking spaces, these being accommodated in a mixture of car barns and on surface parking, screened by hedgerows from view along Church Road. The Travel Plan states each dwelling will have an EV charging point. These are not shown on the drawings and so would be secured via condition. It is envisaged that secure cycle parking be provided within car barns or garden sheds.

## 4. Consultations

- 4.1 **Dark Night Skies:** No objection.
- 4.2 **Southern Water:** No objection subject to conditions (Conditions 9 & 10).

- 4.3 **EHRRRC (Refuse & Recycling) – No comments received.**
- 4.4 **EHDC Drainage – No objection subject to conditions 9 and 10**
- 4.5 **EHDC Trees** – No objection on Arboricultural grounds subject to works being undertaken strictly in accordance with the submitted details. Any amendments are subject to prior approval.
- 4.6 **EHDC Housing Officer – No objection**
- Due to small number of homes required, the mix is acceptable, however preference would be for 2-bedroom 4 person houses.
  - Proposals for all three affordable homes to be for rent is supported.
- 4.7 **EHDC Highways: No objection subject to conditions**
- 4.8 **HCC Ecology – No objection subject to conditions**
- 4.9 **SDNP Heritage Officer – Comments**
- No concerns for the listed memorial through construction phase due to its distance and location beyond the site's curtilage, construction lorry turning with the curtilage of the memorial should be avoided.
  - This area of the village has a linear street pattern, with little, to no back land development, minor outbuildings, and single storey buildings only.
  - The character of a linear development is advised to be more in keeping with that of the village as opposed to the more urban form of development.
- 4.10 **SDNP Design Officer – No objection (comments summarised)**
- Changes over the course of the application have been positive, layout has improved from previous iterations with largely linear alignment with development to the west and northern units addressing the road, whilst set at an angle. This works fairly well with Steep settlement pattern.
  - Proposal now better protects mature trees
  - Proposals now have a better relationship with contours which is positive
  - Visual overdominance of parked cars has been reduced by reducing numbers and mixing car barns and parking behind hedges
  - SuD's changes to introduce more open ditches, permeable paving and road surfacing and green roofs are all positive measures
  - Boundary hedges and walls are positive
  - Building design is 'safe' but 'well executed'.
  - Chimneys are now in more logical places which is positive
  - Traditional materials are positive
  - Would like to have seen more use of local Malmstone; still some concern about material choices but these can be worked out via materials condition.
  - Welcome commitment of applicant to hand coursed flintwork and clay tile roofs to 2 of the houses
  - Design is traditional but varied enough to be satisfactory.
  - In terms of sustainability the proposals pass energy and water criteria but there is still concerns regarding construction waste and materials – however, because the applicant has given a commitment to manage waste on site and only use sustainable timber it is agreed this can be managed by condition.

4.11 **Landscape Officer: Neutral (comments summarised)**

- Principle areas of concern relate to settlement pattern and greenspace, trees and planting and water management.
- Comments that there are no proposals for the remainder of the allocation or commitment to use this to benefit wildlife or the community.
- Layout does not enhance the trees around the site boundary. TPO's that have been made already are welcomed.
- Southern boundary alteration during the course of the application is welcomed.
- Single species hedgerows are not characteristic and do not provide climate resilience or variety for wildlife.
- Revisions and details through Conditions would address the above comments.

4.12 **Steep Parish Council Comments;** Objection for the reasons below:

- 'Deeply disappointed with the application, which has not been consulted on with the village in its current form'
- 'Public open space adjacent to Church Road is a virtual walkthrough compared to previous iterations of the layout.
- Biodiversity park would be unusable as public open space
- Disappointed that the number of affordable housing units is reduced to three
- Concerns regarding the housing mix
- Access to the affordable housing does not appear appropriate
- Design should be Arts and Crafts based
- Parking is underprovided for
- Traffic generation and highways safety concerns
- Seems to be proposals for tree removal and pathways through boundary onto Steep War Memorial Village Club land – there is no agreement to this.
- Village hall car park is at capacity and should not be used for parking by visitors to the houses on the application site
- The draft open space management plan suggests the management of the open space will be offered to the parish council. The trustees will need to reconsider their position regarding the adoption of the proposed public open space with the plans currently as they are.

4.13 **Parish Councillor Freddie Holmes- Objection**

- Does not make a functional village green or create a sense of place in the heart of the village. Community does not want a more linear development along Church Road. The proposed layout fails the community on many levels, but most importantly in the lack of meaningful Public Open Space accessible to all residents.

5. **Representations**

5.1 2 letter of support;

- **Eames Alms Houses** – 'Welcome Affordable Housing units and would like to work with Wilson Designer Homes on the project. The proposed houses are of an appropriate size for Eames Almshouses'
- **Steep in Need (Landowner)**, to note, this letter was submitted with the application rather than in respect of it. The concluding paragraph states; *"The charity confirms that the Planning Application is in the best interests of its beneficiaries and we fully support it, and we*

*very much hope it will meet with your approval”*

5.2 I neutral comment that raises questions regarding community and applicant corporation and makes suggestions with regards to the proposed public open space.

5.3 At the time of writing 23 letters of objection have been received. These raise the following comments and material planning considerations (which includes all those matters submitted by Steep Together community group who submitted a significant representation):

- Original application was invalid
- The application is major development
- Proposals not ambitious enough
- More affordable housing units required
- Accessibility to affordable housing units is difficult
- Design lacks distinctive character
- Public open space is not enough
- Public open space will not serve the community
- Public open space should be open to the war memorial
- Who will maintain the open space
- No visitor parking
- Church Road is already dangerous.
- Will result in increased congestion in the village
- Biodiversity space is boggy and inaccessible
- There are no benches on the open space
- Too many houses
- No spaces for rubbish bins
- Will result in the destruction of the hedge along the front
- Affordable housing will not be for local people and is below standard
- No details of how affordable housing will be secured
- Should be 10 affordable housing units
- There is no turning space in the site.
- Water run-off, swales, ditches, SUD’s networks need to be maintained and paid for
- Does not comply with the Duty.
- Historical context and allocation of the site.
- Does not accord with Local Policies and conflicts with purposes of the National Park
- Heritage Impacts
- Design of the house should reviewed in the context of arts and crafts house
- Too many houses on the plot
- Bin storage not big enough
- Water butts do not connect to gutters or downpipes
- Proposals do not accord with local plan policy
- Development is not landscape led

- Development is uncharacteristic of Steep
- Does not provide 20% informal public open space in the right location and therefore is contrary to SD89
- Environmental impact
- Landscape Impact
- Construction work will cause run off which will pollute surrounding area

5.4 **Officer Response:** the material comments and objections raised above are addressed in more detail within the planning assessment section below.

5.5 In brief, this site is an allocated site within the adopted local plan and the expectation is that it will come forward for housing development. The envisaged quantum of development, as set down by the site allocation is between 8 and 12 units. It is noted that nowhere does the site allocation state that this is a 'minimum' but it should be taken as an agreed guide.

5.6 The submitted application relates to a slightly smaller site than that which was allocated, 5771sqm as opposed to 6875 sqm. The application proposes less than 10 residential dwellings and therefore it is not 'major' development as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Procedure) (England) Order 2015. Some of the objections received contend that the submission documents did not meet the requirements of our local validation list.

5.7 These comments are noted, however officers considered that the application was able to be assessed on the basis of the submitted documents and plans and that, where there has been a request for further information arising from the consideration of the application and the response of specialist consultants, this has been requested from the applicants and duly received. The application was revised during the process of assessment, and, following receipt of this revised and additional information, another round of public and statutory consultation was carried out.

## 6. Planning Policy

6.1 Most relevant polices of the adopted South Downs Local Plan (2019) (a longer list of other relevant policies and legislation can be found in Appendix 1)

- SD1: Sustainable Development
- SS2: Ecosystems Services
- SD4: Landscape Character
- SD5: Design
- SD8: Dark Night Skies
- SD9: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- SD11: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- SD12: Historic Environment
- SD17: Protection of the Water Environment
- SD19 : Transport and Accessibility
- SD22: Parking Provision
- SD25: Development Strategy
- SD26: Supply of Homes
- SD27: Mix of Homes
- SD28: Affordable Homes
- SD48: Climate Change and sustainable use of resources



- SD49: Flood Risk Management
- SD50: Sustainable Drainage Systems
- SD89: Site of Allocation - Land South of Church Road, Steep

6.2 Relevant supplementary planning documents (SPD) and other guidance

- Parking for Residential and Non-Residential Development SPD (2021)
- Ecosystems Services TAN
- Affordable Housing SPD
- Design Guide SDP
- Sustainable Construction SPD

6.3 Most relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021

- Section 12: Achieving well designed places.
- Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
- Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

6.4 Most relevant policies of the South Downs Management Plan (2020-2025)

- Policy 1 – Landscape
- Policy 3 – Dark Night Skies

**7. Planning Assessment**

Principle of development

- 7.1 Policy SD1 refers to the need for sustainable development and the presumption in favour of this as well as referencing the National Park Purposes.
- 7.2 The application site is part of site allocation SD89 which states; Land South of church Road Steep is allocated for the development of between 8 and 12 Residential Dwellings (ClassC3 use). Planning permission will not be granted for any other use. Detailed proposals that meet the following site-specific development will be permitted;
- a) Site boundaries sympathetic to the local landscape;  
*Officer Response: Following the retention of as much as the existing hedge as possible, the proposed planting of native hedge boundaries and the introduction of traditionally constructed brick and flint walls the proposed boundaries are considered sympathetic.*
- b) To provide all necessary vehicular parking on-site to avoid additional on street parking in local roads;  
*Officer Response; All parking on site, parking standards met.*
- c) The site layout must not include opportunities for future vehicular access into adjacent fields;  
*Officer Response: No opportunities, standard met.*
- d) Retention and protection of existing mature trees;  
*Officer Response: All of the trees proposed for removal fall into category C and U. The application originally proposed the removal of 14 trees, these trees are removed to facilitate development and due to ash dieback impacting some trees. During the course of the application the applicant has committed to retaining the lower trunks of these trees where possible to provide habitat poles.*
- e) The location of housing and access roads to have regard to localised areas of potential surface water flood risk;  
*Officer Response: There is no objection from Southern Water or EHDC drainage to the proposals. A drainage strategy and flood risk statement was submitted with the application.*

*During the course of the application an additional swale, along the southern boundary of the proposed new 'green' was added. The non pumping of surface water and the use of open ditches/swales, for which a maintenance plan will be agreed, is considered to be an acceptable method dealing with Surface Water Drainage on this site. In addition to these methods of surface water management the development also proposed green roofs for the car barns and the use of water butts in gardens.*

*Water quality is addressed separately below under paragraph 7.30 – 7.34 and in reference to SD17.*

- f) A proportion of the site should be provided as public open space directly accessible from the village hall and car park.

*Officer Response; In addition to the above policy required paragraph 9.240 notes that "The site has previously been marked for recreational use, therefore proposals should provide approximately 20% of the total area as informal public open space accessible from the village hall and car park". (officer emphasis)*

*The proposals allow for 2 areas of public open space, these are the 'Green' to the front (northern most) portion of the site and the biodiversity park, which is situated along the western side and lower southern portion of the site. The Green is approximately 16% of the total application site area. The Biodiversity Park, which is publicly accessible but is principally to serve nature, is approximately 17% of the total application site. Overall, the informal public open space is approximately 33% of the total application site. These spaces are directly accessible from the village hall and car park as set out by SD89. This level of informal open space, given the other requirements of the site allocation policy, which must be balanced against this need, is considered acceptable and to comply with the site allocation policy requirements and supporting paragraph.*

In order for the development to have an overall positive impact on the ability of the natural environment to contribute to ecosystem services, development proposals must address the following:

- a) Minimise hard surfaced areas on site; and
- b) New planting should be suitable for pollinating species.

*Officer Response. Hard surfaces on site are kept to a minimum and where possible are permeable. Roofs drain to water butts and open swales and green roofs are used for the car barns. Following alterations to retain tree trunks wherever possible as habitat poles, the retention of the existing hedge where possible and where new introducing native hedge mixes and by including areas of wildflower and bulb planting the development is considered to have an overall positive impact on pollinating species.*

- 7.3 Given the above the proposals are considered to accord with policy SD1 and SD89 and the principal of development is acceptable, subject to compliance with other relevant policies of the local plan which are discussed further below.

Design, Heritage, Landscape and Sustainability

- 7.4 The National Park is afforded the highest level of Landscape protection under the National Park Purposes and duty, and relevant legislation.
- 7.5 Policies SD 4 and SD 5 only permit development where it will preserve and enhance landscape character and where sensitive and high-quality design makes a positive contribution to the overall character and appearance of the area. Policy SD12 notes that development proposals will only be permitted where they conserve and enhance the historic environment, including heritage assets and their setting. Paragraph 203 of the NPPF notes that "in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of; c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness".
- 7.6 The site allocation has directed that this site be used for residential housing and therefore the principle of development is agreed. It is accepted that the landscape character of this site will change from a green field open space to a more intensively used and built-up residential space.

- 7.7 During the course of the application the site layout and plot positioning has been revised, upon the advice of the design officer. Plot 1 now aligns with and has a pedestrian access from Church Road and the 'Green' space has been widened, this being considered to better reflect the settlement pattern of Steep and still to provide a visual connection with the Village Hall. The southern site boundary has been changed to allow this to connect with the western 'biodiversity park' and to ensure that it is outside of private ownership – and therefore can be managed for wildlife.
- 7.8 The applicant has agreed to retain the existing front hedge line where possible and allowing for visibility splays. The planting scheme submitted refers to native hedging, and some of the proposed hedging is shown to be a native mix and these hedges are acceptable, however there are also a number of single species beech hedges proposed and these are not acceptable. Therefore, hedging details are requested under condition 5 as set out below.
- 7.9 Other positive design changes include;
- A simplification the surfacing materials to a combination of permeable tarmac (access road and driveway to plot 6), Limestone chippings (Plots 7, 8 & 9) and self-binding gravel for the footpaths where shown.
  - Commitment to hand coursed flint where used
  - Change from predominately slate roofs to a mix of slate and clay tile
  - Car barns to be varied in design and to use green roofs.
  - Revisions to chimney position – note, these are proposed as working chimneys and will service fire places/log burners – (for both the affordable and private units).
- 7.10 The design officer considers the materials palate to be broadly acceptable, the use of Indian sandstone is concerning because it is neither locally characteristic nor (if from India) sustainable. A materials condition is recommended (Condition Number 3) to ensure a high-quality palate is secured. Overall, the proposed scheme is considered to make a positive contribution to the character and distinctiveness of this part of Steep.
- 7.11 There is variation in the proposed architecture that is reflective of Steep, there is also a variation in the proposed materials, these reference some of the materials used within the surrounding village. There is a stated commitment from the applicant to ensure a high level of finish and to use hand coursed flint work and locally sourced materials. Such details are to be secured via condition to ensure that the proposed finishes are executed to the highest standard.
- 7.12 The application site is opposite the T junction where Mill Lane joins Church Road. The Steep War Memorial sits at this Junction and is grade II listed (Historic England List entry 1392384) The Summary of Importance from the Historic England website notes; “War memorials have very strong historic and cultural significance, on both a local and national scale. This unusual memorial by a notable architect and garden designer has additional interest as an early First World War memorial; the earliest erected in Hampshire”.
- 7.13 The development is some distance way from this heritage asset and does not impact in a structural manner upon its significance. However, it does have the potential to impact the setting of the memorial.
- 7.14 The NPPF glossary defines the setting of a heritage asset as: The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.
- 7.15 The War Memorial sits on the eastern side of Mill Lane, facing this lane rather than Church Road. It is set back into the hedgerow, behind the kerbline and with a small cobbled area which has planted flowers in front of it. 2 benches sit within this setting and address the memorial. The immediate (cobble, planting and wider road splay) setting of this asset give it a sense of calm with space around it, they contribute positively in this regard. The

development will not physically impact the war memorial itself or the space around it, however it will be visible from it and in this regard will impact the setting of the heritage asset.

- 7.16 The portion of the development immediately opposite the War Memorial is the proposed new green. This will be partially screened by the existing and newly planted hedging, there is a pedestrian link through to this space from the pavement along Church Road. The proposed houses will be over 30 metres away at the nearest point from the war memorial and its immediate setting and at an oblique angle. The most visible property from the memorial will be plot 5, a 2 storey, 2 bedroom brick and flint property.
- 7.17 The set back of the new properties, behind the new green and retained hedging ensures there is a significant visual and physical separation between the heritage asset and the new houses. It is considered that the setting of this asset is preserved. There is no objection to the scheme from the Heritage Officer to the scheme in terms of its impact upon the listed war memorial. It is noted that the potential turning of construction trucks must be avoided within its curtilage. This can be controlled via the construction management plan under condition 14.
- 7.18 There have been concerns raised regarding the impact of the proposals upon other heritage assets within the vicinity of the site. These concerns are noted. The buildings in question are some way from the application site and in all cases they are visually screened from the site by vegetation and buildings. It is considered that the proposals preserve the setting of the listed buildings in the wider community of Steep.
- 7.19 The landscaping officer raises various concerns regarding the application but considers that additional details and the attachment of appropriate landscaping and drainage detail conditions (4, 5 and 9) should address these. These include drainage, bridge and swale details, service run locations, boundary treatments, green roof details, management of greenspace/biodiversity park, sections to show level changes and cut and fill, rainwater harvesting details.
- 7.20 The application proposes the use of heat pumps and solar panels as well as green roofs (to the car barns) and water butts. It achieves between a 66-81% reduction in CO2 emissions and is predicted to restrict water consumption to 103 litres/person/day. It therefore is considered to exceed the requirements of policy SD28.
- 7.21 Taking into account the revisions during the course of the application the scheme now addresses Church Road in an appropriate manner and a proposed mix of architectural design and materials have improved the overall scheme. The proposed Green will provide a visual link to the Village Hall and the biodiversity park.
- 7.22 Acknowledging that the principle of the development of this site has been set out by SD89 the proposals are considered to be an appropriate and sensitive approach for this particular site and the approach is landscape led in this regard. The proposals would accord with policies SD4, SD5 and SD12.

Ecology and biodiversity net gain

- 7.23 During the course of the application further details were sought from the applicant regarding ecology and biodiversity net gain.
- 7.24 Following these revisions there is no objection from the ecology officer to the application. Measures are recommended to ensure the protection of reptiles during the construction process and to ensure the management of the proposed receptor habitats post development.
- 7.25 The application was submitted in April 2023 and is therefore exempt from mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain. The application proposes on site ecosystems service enhancements in the form of bird and bat boxes, hibernaculum and wildlife refuges areas. The scheme also proposes additional native hedges, tree planting, wildflower and bulb planting.
- 7.26 Policy SD9 (b) of the South Downs Local Plan notes that development proposals should identify and incorporate opportunities for net gain in biodiversity. Therefore, as part of the

adopted development plan, proposals for development are required to address BNG. Paragraph 2.5 of the TAN confirms that the Authority is seeking a minimum of 10% net gain in biodiversity. The current metric for this scheme, as submitted at time of writing, shows an on site BNG of 1.36%. In addition to this the applicant has committed to the purchasing of offsite credits, via a s106 agreement. This would ensure that the development provides a 10% net gain in BNG which is sought within the TAN.

- 7.27 A condition is proposed (number 5) requiring a landscaping and planting scheme in order to secure the ecosystems services measures and on site BNG enhancements. Detailed indicative planting schemes have been shown on plan form and these include mixed native hedging, however a landscaping scheme would ensure species regulation and that planting methods, tree pits and positioning of bird and bat boxes etc is appropriate. It would also ensure that any plant that dies, becomes diseased or is removed within 10 years first planting shall be replaced.

#### Trees

- 7.28 A total of 14 trees are to be removed as a result of the development, these are as below:
- Northern boundary/portion: 5 – 2 x Hawthorn, 1 x grey Alder, 1 x Ash, 1 x Apple.
  - Eastern Boundary: 4 – 1 x Sycamore, 3 x Ash
  - Southern boundary: 3 trees – 1 x Goat Willow, 1 x Ash, 1 x English Elm plus a group of Goat Willow
  - Western boundary: 2 trees – 1 x Ash and 1 x Common Oak plus a group of Ash.
- 7.29 Where these trees are embedded in the existing boundary hedging or it is possible to do so within the site confines the applicant has agreed to retain them as habitat poles, which are shown on the revised structural planting plan.
- 7.30 As noted at paragraph 1.3 above the western boundary line between the application site and village hall car park is now subject to a TPO, so any further tree removed or significant pruning along this boundary will be controlled. A TPO is also recommended along the southern boundary and eastern boundary of the site and at the time of writing was under discussion with EHDC.
- 7.31 Policy SD11 sets out that development proposals will be permitted where they conserve and enhance trees, hedgerows and woodlands. And that where they affect trees and hedgerows, as with this site, they must be informed by a full site survey, including an Ecological Survey, Arboricultural Method Statement and associated Tree Protection Plan, and include a management plan.
- 7.32 These documents have been submitted with the application and the extent of tree and hedge removal has been considered. The applicant has now committed to retaining the established hedge along the northern edge of the site where possible. Sections of this site must be removed as shown on the plans to enable site lines. 21 trees will be planted on site and a landscaping condition (5) is attached to ensure these are appropriate native species. There is no objection to the scheme from the EHDC tree officer.

#### Site Layout and Public Open Space

- 7.33 The site layout was the source of debate during pre-application discussions and the resulting written pre application advice (SDNP/22/05378/PRE).
- 7.34 Public consultation led the applicants to conclude a deeper development, putting a large village green at the front, northern part, of the site and having houses which utilised the southern and middle part of the site would be appropriate.
- 7.35 However, SDNP officers and DRP considered this arrangement to be at odds with the settlement pattern of Steep, and to result in a development where the proposed houses and their gardens would be likely overshadowed by trees and waterlogged for a large part of the year.

- 7.36 Consequently, an application has been submitted which proposes a more linear settlement pattern, but which also seek to retain public open space at the front (northern) portion of the site. This has resulted in a different layout to the provision of public open space, which is now situated to the northern and western top part of the site. Additional open space (which will be public, but which is planned for wildlife and BNG) is shown at the bottom western edge and along the southern boundary of the site.
- 7.37 The width of the Green, as shown at pre app stage has reduced, from approximately 24 metres when taken opposite the existing access gate to 16 metres. However, gains are made at the western edge of the site and this increases from approximately 21 metres to 26 metres. The overall amount of informal public open space provided is approximately 33% and more than that shown at pre application level and therefore this element of the scheme is considered to be compliant with SD89.
- 7.38 On this particular site, which has been allocated for between 8 and 12 residential units there is a balance to be made between provision of public open space and site layout in terms of landscape led and contextual design as well as an efficient use of the land in accordance with paragraph 123 of the NPPF. The applicant has allowed for the potential to connect the application site through to the remainder of the allocated land, which is within the ownership of the Village Hall. This detail is also in compliance with policy SD89.
- 7.39 Concern has been raised as to who will be responsible for the management and maintenance of the public open space on site. A draft open space management plan has been submitted and it is suggested to members that this be reviewed further by officers and secured via a section 106 agreement to ensure funds are put in place for the upkeep of this area.

Highways, Car parking and Refuse

- 7.40 Following revisions and the submission of additional information there is no objection from the Highways Authority to the application. The proposed level of car parking meets policy standards and the car parking itself will be well screened from public viewpoints vis the use car barns and public hedges. EV charging points are provided for each dwelling regardless of tenure and cycle parking is provided in a combination of garages, sheds and car barns.
- 7.41 Bin storage is provided in the centre of the site, approximately 28 metres from the site access and over 30 metres from the furthest residential property. The refuse strategy cited within the submitted transport statement states that “refuse will be collected from kerbside and a refuse collection point will be provided in a convenient location, clear of the public highway where bins can be stored on collection day for emptying”. In the absence of an objection from EHDC on this matter, the proposed arrangements are considered to be acceptable.
- 7.42 There have been comments regarding the level of parking provided and that this will generate additional parking from visitors along Church Road. However the car parking SPD allows for visitor parking in its calculation of spaces required per unit and, given that the development complies with this SPD and the relevant policies SD19, SD20 and SD22, it is not considered a reason for refusal could be sustained on highways or parking grounds

Surface water drainage and Water Quality

- 7.43 As noted by within the proposals section above there are a number of ditches around and within the site. The submitted drainage strategy and flood risk assessment refers to these as “usually dry and are only noted to become temporarily following significant rainfall which correlates with the very small catchment area of the site”.
- 7.44 The proposals involve the infilling of the existing ditch which runs to the west of the centre line of the site, this will be relocated, further to the west and run alongside the boundaries of plot 4 and 9 in an open swale. Additional swales are also proposed in the gardens of plots 6, 7 and 8.
- 7.45 The drainage strategy comprises of permeable surfaced access, parking areas and hard landscaping (patios) which would drain to these swales (which currently appear to have concrete liners – a detail which would need to be changed via condition (Condition No 9).

- 7.46 Surface water from plots 1 – 4 will drain naturally to a holding tank underneath the central area of the site and through to the ditches. Run off from plots 6, 7 and 8 will be directed into storage areas under the patio/decking areas proposed to the rear of the plots. Discharge from this storage area would then pass through a sand filter integrated into a small flower bed planter or similar to each deck and then discharge into the flank ditches.
- 7.47 Comments have been made regarding the surface water drainage scheme and these include the potentially adverse impacts of re-locating the ditch in the middle (west) of the site further west and also concerns as to how the drainage system will be maintained and managed and at whose cost.
- 7.48 Further detail is required with regards to the proposed ditches/swales and how these will connect to the existing (and heavily rooted) ditch which runs along the southern boundary of the existing field. However, at this stage, the scheme has been sufficiently developed to consider it and any further improvements in more detail via a condition to ensure that the scheme delivers as far a landscape-led scheme as possible and contributes to biodiversity.
- 7.49 The proposals will conserve existing water quality in accordance with SD17 and the drainage scheme submitted is in line SD50. There is no objection from the drainage officer, the ecologist or the lead local flood authority to the drainage scheme proposed. Taking the above into account it is not considered a reason for refusal could be sustained on drainage grounds.

Housing Quantum, Affordable Housing and Housing Mix

- 7.50 The site allocation envisages between 8 – 12 houses on this site, this is not a minimum but needs to be read in conjunction with paragraph 123 of the NPPF which requires an efficient use of land. The site is within the settlement boundary of Steep and, having taken into account other relevant policies within the Local Plan it is considered that, on balance, the proposed quantum is acceptable, and in accordance with Plan policy.
- 7.51 The site allocation does not set a specific affordable housing percentage for this site and therefore it should accord with the adopted policies of the Local Plan. The proposals include 3 affordable rented properties. This accords with the sliding scale as set out by SD28 which notes that schemes of 9 units should provide 3 affordable homes, at least 2 of which are a rented affordable tenure. The affordable housing units are all 2 bedroom properties, however there is no objection from the housing officer to this mix and informal discussions between a potential provider and the applicant have indicated that this mix would be appropriate.
- 7.52 The remaining 6 market units consist of 1 x 2 bed (17%) 3 x 3 bed (50%) and 2 x 4 bed (33%). This mix is considered acceptable and provides in excess of the required amount of 2 and 3 bedroom units. The scheme complies with affordable housing policy and the applicant advises that the proposed 4 bedroom units assist in achieving viability across the site, therefore, on balance, the excess of 4 bedroom units is acceptable in this regard.

Conclusion

- 7.53 Overall, the scale and design of the proposals are acceptable having taken into account consultee responses, representations, and the landscape character and appearance of the immediate and surrounding area. There are no impacts upon surrounding amenities as a direct result of these proposals which would justify a refusal of Planning Permission.
- 7.54 The NPPF outlines overarching economic, social and environmental objectives to sustainable development. In these respects, the scheme would deliver a policy compliant development on an already allocated site. Environmentally, the scheme would conserve and marginally enhance on site BNG, provide ecosystems services enhancement and meet the sustainability credentials of the local plan.
- 7.55 The proposals substantially comply with the Local Plan and the NPPF, National Park Purposes and duty, and relevant legislation. There are no material considerations of sufficient weight which would justify refusing permission.

7.56 The application is, therefore, recommended for approval subject to a S106 agreement and conditions as set out below.

## 8. Reason for Recommendation

8.1 It is recommended that:

- 1) That planning permission be granted subject to:
  - i. A S106 legal agreement, the final form of which is delegated to the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Chairman of the Planning Committee, to secure:
    - 3 x 2bed Affordable Housing Units
    - Informal public open space management scheme
    - BNG enhancement scheme
  - ii. The conditions set out in paragraph 9. of the report
- 2) That authority be delegated to the Director of Planning to refuse Planning Permission, with appropriate reasons, if the legal agreement is not completed, or insufficient progress made, within six months of the 11 April 2024 Planning Committee meeting.

## 9. Conditions

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

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the plans listed below under the heading "Plans Referred to in Consideration of this Application".

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

### Materials

3. No development above slab level shall be commenced unless and until a schedule of materials and samples of such materials, finishes and colours to be used for external walls, windows and doors, roofs, patios and rainwater goods of the proposed buildings, and also the boundary walls or fences to them and any other enclosed structure, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All materials used shall conform to those approved.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to control the development in detail in the interests of the character and appearance of the area and the quality of the development.

### Levels

4. Notwithstanding the details provided, no development shall commence until details of site levels and longitudinal and latitudinal sections through the site including through the existing ditch (and proposed SUDs receptor area) where this joins with the proposed new ditches/swales have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These shall show how the new ditches will join the existing ditch and the proportion of tree roots that may need to be removed to enable this join. The development shall thereafter be implemented in full accordance with the agreed details.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory development which responds to the characteristics of the site and protects the existing ecology within the receptor area.

### Landscaping

5. No development above slab level shall take place until a further detailed Scheme of Soft and Hard Landscape Works has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include (but not be limited to):



- a. Written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment;
- b. Planting methods, tree pits & guying methods;
- c. Schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate;
- d. Retained areas of trees and hedgerows;
- e. Details of all hard-surfaces, including paths, kerb edges, access ways, boundary treatments, bin and cycle stores and parking spaces, including their appearance, dimensions and siting;
- f. Details of the siting, specifications and management of the Sustainable Urban Drainage systems;
- g. A landscape schedule for a minimum period of 10 years including details of the arrangements for its implementation;
- h. A timetable for implementation of the soft and hard landscaping works.
- i. A landscape plan with services shown;
- j. Delivery of the on-site measures outlined in the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment.

The scheme of Soft and Hard Landscaping Works shall be implemented in accordance with the approved timetable. Any plant which dies, becomes diseased or is removed within the first ten years of planting, shall be replaced with another of similar type and size, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To achieve an appropriate landscaping scheme to integrate the development into the landscape and provide a setting for the new development.

#### Ecology

6. Prior to commencement of development a CEMP and LEMP, incorporating the mitigation measures from the Ecological Impact Assessment (January 2023), Reptile Mitigation Strategy (November 2023) and the DEFRA Metric (Updated March 2024) by ACD Environmental and accompanying general arrangement plan Ref 2306-TF-XX-00-DR-L-1001 shall be submitted to the LPA for approval in writing. Development shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved measures.

Reason: To protect and enhance biodiversity in accordance with the Habitat and Species Regulations 2017, Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, NERC Act, NPPF and Policy SD8 and SD9 of the South Downs Local Plan.

#### Dark night skies

7. No development shall commence above slab level until an external lighting scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall specify the type and location of all external lighting to be installed throughout the site. All external lighting on the dwellings shall be restricted to down lighters that do not exceed 1000 lumens, which shall be designed and shielded to minimise upwards light spillage. The measures shall thereafter be implemented in full accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To conserve dark night skies.

#### Sustainable Construction

8. Prior to the commencement of development hereby permitted, detailed information in a Design Stage Sustainable Construction Report in the form of:
  - a. Design Stage SAP 10 assessment for each dwelling.
  - b. Design stage plan and specification for the electric vehicle charging points.
  - c. Design stage BRE water calculator.

- d. Product specification for EV, air source heat pump and solar PV, waste facilities, rainwater harvesting and materials; and
- e. Grown in Britain or FSC Certificates for timber.

Demonstrating that the development will:

- a. Reduce predicted CO2 emissions by at least 12% due to energy efficiency measures and onsite renewable energy, compared with the maximum allowed by Part L1A 2021.
- b. Provide EV charge points for each dwelling in a suitable location to ensure simultaneous charging, with a minimum power rating output of 7kW and a universal socket.
- c. Have a predicted water consumption of no more than 85 litres per person per day and that the development is water neutral.
- d. Have separate internal bin collection for recyclables matching local waste collection service; and
- e. Have a private compost bin.
- f. Be designed to minimise overheating risk.

Shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be built in full accordance with these agreed details.

Reason: To ensure the development demonstrates a high level of sustainable performance to address mitigation of, and adaptation to, predicted climate change.

#### Drainage

- 9. No development shall commence until a detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme, including a Management Plan detailing its future management and maintenance, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall thereafter be undertaken and maintained in full accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the development demonstrates a high level of sustainable performance to address mitigation of, and adaptation to, predicted climate change.

- 10. No development shall commence until a detailed drainage scheme for the means of foul water disposal has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include drainage calculations and a Management and Maintenance Plan. The development shall be carried out in full accordance with the approved details. No dwelling shall be occupied until the drainage system has been implemented in full accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory provision of foul water drainage.

#### Highways

- 11. Prior to the development being brought into use, the vehicular accesses and car parking spaces, including car barns shall have been completed in full accordance with the approved plans and shall be retained thereafter.

Reason: To ensure adequate on-site parking is provided

- 12. Prior to the occupation of the development, the visibility splays of 2.4m by 43m shall be provided at the vehicular access points onto Church Road in full accordance with approved site layout plan 22 Rev C. Once provided, the visibility splays shall thereafter be maintained and kept free of all obstructions over a height of 0.6m above the adjoining carriageway level.

Reason: To provide satisfactory access and in the interests of highway safety.

- 13. Prior to the development being brought into use, detailed plans showing covered and secure cycle parking spaces shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local

Planning Authority and retained thereafter.

Reason: To provide appropriate cycle storage to enable alternative sustainable modes of travel.

#### Construction Management Plan

14. No development shall commence, including any works of demolition, until a Construction Environmental Management Plan has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The approved Plan shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The Plan shall provide for (but not be limited to):
- i. An indicative programme for carrying out of the works;
  - ii. Method Statement for the demolition and construction work;
  - iii. The arrangements for public consultation and liaison during the construction works;
  - iv. Measures to minimise the noise (including vibration) generated by the construction process to include hours of work, proposed method for constructing foundations, the selection of plant and machinery and use of noise mitigation barrier(s);
  - v. Details of any floodlighting, including location, height, type and direction of light sources and intensity of illumination;
  - vi. The parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors;
  - vii. Loading and unloading of plant and materials;
  - viii. Storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development;
  - ix. The erection and maintenance of security hoarding, where appropriate;
  - x. Wheel washing facilities;
  - xi. Measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction;
  - xii. A scheme for recycling/disposing of waste, including spoil, resulting from demolition and construction works;
  - xiii. Protection of pedestrian routes during construction;
  - xiv. Provision for storage, collection and disposal of rubbish;
  - xv. Any re-use of on-site material and spoil arising from site clearance and demolition work.
  - xvi. Working hours.
  - xvii. Measures to ensure the protection of the grade II listed war memorial and to prevent the turning of large construction vehicles within close vicinity of this structure

Reason: In the interests of highway safety, the amenities of the area and the protection of the grade II listed heritage asset.

#### Permitted Development Rights

15. Notwithstanding the provisions of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no buildings, structures or works as defined within Part 1 of Schedule 2, classes E and F and Part 2 of Schedule 2, class A; inclusive of that Order, shall be erected or undertaken on the site unless permission is granted by the Local Planning Authority pursuant to an application for the purpose.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to regulate and control the development of land in the interests of the character and appearance of the area and amenity.

Trees

16. Protective measures, including fencing and ground protection, in accordance with the Arboricultural Impact Appraisal and Method Statement reference PRI24250aia\_ams dated 20/07/2023 by ACD and the drawings R121341-01A and PRI4250-03 as submitted to the Local Planning Authority shall be installed prior to any demolition, construction or groundwork commencing on the site. Works shall be carried out in accordance with the methods stated within this approved statement, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the amenity and the landscape character of the area and to ensure protection and long term viability of retained trees and to minimise impact of construction activity.

**MIKE HUGHES**  
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Appendices: I. Information concerning consideration of applications before committee  
SDNPA Consultees: Legal Services, Development Manager  
Background Documents: [All planning application plans, supporting documents, and consultation and third party responses](#)  
[National Planning Policy Framework \(2021\)](#)  
[South Downs Local Plan \(2014-33\)](#)  
[South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan](#)  
[Adopted Affordable Housing SPD - South Downs National Park Authority](#)  
[Adopted Parking SPD - South Downs National Park Authority](#)  
[Adopted Design Guide SPD - South Downs National Park Authority](#)  
[Adopted Sustainable Construction SPD - South Downs National Park Authority](#)  
[Biodiversity Net Gain Technical Advice Note \(TAN\) - South Downs National Park Authority](#)  
[Ecosystem Services Technical Advice Note \(TAN\) - South Downs National Park Authority](#)