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Date: 25th August 2026

Please ask for: Mr S Davis  
Tel: 01903 737874

Your Ref:

Our Ref: AL/69/26/ESO

Dear Ms Richardson,

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Environmental Screening Opinion for the erection of up to 220 dwellings, including market and affordable housing, together with public open space, play provision, green and blue infrastructure, biodiversity enhancements, drainage infrastructure and associated works.

Land West of Woodgate Nurseries and Lidsey Road (A29) Woodgate

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## Screening Opinion

The Group Head of Planning has determined under delegated powers that the above proposal does not require the submission of an Environmental Statement, as any impacts as there are on the environment are not likely to be of a magnitude to be covered by the Regulations. The following environmental issues are considered relevant to this proposal and have been considered in reaching this decision:

The Council considers that the proposal is an "Urban Development Project" as found within section 10(b) of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended). Regarding the Schedule 2 relevant criteria and thresholds, it is noted that the proposed number of dwellings (up to 220) exceeds the applicable threshold of 150 and the site area (10.9ha per the Statement or 10.71ha per the annotation on the Location Plan) also exceeds the threshold of 5ha.

According to paragraph: 032 (Reference ID: 4-032-20170728) of the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), all developments in sensitive areas should also be screened regardless of whether they meet the stated thresholds. The NPPG states that sensitive areas are:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest and European Sites.
- National Parks, the Broads, and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and
- World Heritage Sites and scheduled monuments.

The NPPG states that "In certain cases, local designations which are not included in the definition of "sensitive areas", but which are nonetheless environmentally sensitive, may also be relevant in determining whether an assessment is required". Your observations on page 8 of your statement that the site is not in a 'sensitive area' are agreed. The site is within the 12km buffer for the Singleton and Cocking Tunnels Special Area of Conservation (SAC), but this is a buffer area, and the site is a considerable distance from the actual limits of the SAC. There are no sensitive areas in close proximity to the site.

Paragraph: 017 (Reference ID: 4-017-20170728) of the NPPG states that "If a proposed project is listed in the first column in Schedule 2 of the 2017 Regulations and exceeds the relevant thresholds or criteria set out in the second column, the proposal needs to be screened by the local planning authority to determine whether significant effects on the environment are likely and hence whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is required." The proposal is Schedule 2 development. An EIA is not automatically required unless the Local Planning Authority considers that the proposed development is likely to have significant effects on the environment.

It is necessary to consider the proposal against Schedule 3 of the Regulations which outlines the criteria to consider in determining whether development falling within Schedule 2 will require an EIA. These criteria include (1) the characteristics of the development (e.g., its size, design, cumulative impact along with other developments, use of natural resources); (2) the environmental sensitivity of the location; and (3) the characteristics of the potential impact (e.g., its magnitude and duration). Paragraph 018 (reference ID: 4-018-20170728) states:

"Only a very small proportion of Schedule 2 development will require an Environmental Impact Assessment. While it is not possible to formulate criteria or thresholds which will provide a universal test of whether or not an assessment is required, it is possible to offer a broad indication of the type or scale of development which is likely to require an assessment. It is also possible to provide an indication of the sort of development for which an assessment is unlikely to be necessary. To aid local planning authorities to determine whether a project is likely to have significant environmental effects, a set of indicative thresholds and criteria have been produced. The table also gives an indication of the types of impact that are most likely to be significant for particular types of development. However, it should not be presumed that developments above the indicative thresholds should always be subject to assessment, or those falling below these thresholds could never give rise to significant effects, especially where the development is in an environmentally sensitive location. Each development will need to be considered on its merits."

The indicative thresholds linked from paragraph: 057 (Reference ID: 4-057-2070720) state that "Environmental Impact Assessment is unlikely to be required for the re-development of land unless the new development is on a significantly greater scale than the previous use, or the types of impact are of a markedly different nature or there is a high level of contamination." In respect of sites which have not previously been intensively developed, the following criteria are relevant:

- (i) The area of the scheme is more than 5 hectares; or
- (ii) it would provide a total of more than 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> of new commercial floorspace; or
- (iii) the development would have significant urbanising effects in a previously non-urbanised area (e.g., a new development of more than 1,000 dwellings).

The proposal exceeds criteria (i) but not (iii) whilst criteria (ii) is not relevant. This Screening Response now continues in response to the headings given within Schedule 3.

## (1) Location of the Development

The site is rectangular in shape and will be south and west of the settlement of Woodgate. A mainline railway adjoins the northern site boundary, but the nearest railway station is in the separate settlement of Barnham. The site itself is characterised by agricultural fields part intersected by an agricultural track and separately intersected by a hedgerow.

According to the "Agricultural Land Classification - Provisional (England)" data (<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>), the agricultural fields are indicated to be Grade 2. Therefore, the land is likely to be best and most versatile agricultural land. The site is relatively flat and is bordered by hedgerows and trees some of which (on the eastern side) are subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO/AL/3/24).

To the west, beyond a stream (which feeds into the Aldingbourne Rife), the site adjoins the Lidsey Landfill site. This stopped accepting non-inert waste in December 2015 and is in the process of restoration and aftercare. There are related waste permissions at the site comprising a leachate storage compound and electricity generation from landfill gas. The land rises up significantly on the landfill site preventing long distance views to/from locations west of the site. It is understood that gas monitoring and groundwater sampling has been undertaken, and these demonstrate no harm to human health arising from residential occupation of the site. No specific gas protection measures would be required.

The site adjoins land having the benefit of outline permissions (AL/89/24/OUT and AL/70/23/OUT) for up to 185 dwellings. A further site east of AL/70/23/OUT has outline and reserved matters permission for 93 dwellings and it is that site that provides the vehicular access for the other two sites and your new proposal. The site is also bordered to the east (in part) by a horticultural nursery complex.

To the south-east, on the opposite side of the A29 lies land which forms part of a wider allocation by policy SD5 BEW of the Arun Local Plan for a mixed-use development comprising the erection of at least at least 3,000 homes, alongside infrastructure including a new primary school, community facilities, public open space, sports, and retail provision.

The site is not in the setting of any heritage assets but is within an archaeological notification (consultation) area. The site lies in current (and future) Flood Zone 1 but is noted to have a high risk of groundwater flooding and there are known areas of surface water flooding along the western site edge associated with the stream. Overall, the site is not environmentally sensitive, and any environmental impacts are likely to be localised in nature.

## (2) Characteristics of the Development

The development will comprise up to 220 dwellings, associated parking, road/footway provision, foot/cycle paths, public open space, play provision, landscaping, drainage features, and ancillary works. There is no indication of building scale, but the separate pre-application response stated the houses should match with the prevalent heights in the immediate area (i.e. not exceed two-storeys). The site is not within reasonable walking distance of a well-

connected railway station therefore will not be subject to any minimum density standards set by the NPPF.

It is proposed to take vehicular access from the access approved for the adjoining sites with parts of the site also linking directly with the adjoining approved sites. It is understood that any application will be supported by substantial landscaping to ensure the development is not intrusive in the wider landscape and to help secure Biodiversity Net Gain. The characteristics of the development alone are not likely to be significant in the context of the EIA regulations.

### (3) Characteristics of the Potential Impacts

The development is unlikely to result in any significant harm to ecological interests and any harm that does arise can be mitigated through planning conditions and through the approval of an appropriate layout (such as by open space, landscaping, and buffers to hedgerows and the existing stream). The site is not at risk of fluvial or pluvial flooding, and the layout can be designed to avoid homes being at risk of surface water flooding. The development represents an opportunity to improve the existing surface water drainage system through infiltration and reduce discharge rates to local watercourses. The development of the site will not directly affect any heritage assets. Should there be any archaeological interest features present then these are likely to be of local significance and can be recorded prior to development.

Although the proposal will intensify the use of the access onto Lidsey Road and consequentially increase traffic movements on the A29 in the vicinity, this impact is unlikely to be significant in the context of the EIA Regulations. The impact of additional traffic on the adjacent road will not itself be particularly noticeable as the A29 is a main road route and already busy at certain times of the day.

There may be a more noticeable impact on existing levels of queuing traffic on the A29 at the Woodgate level crossing to the north. However, this is itself subject to future mitigation in the form of a realigned A29 to be delivered through the nearby BEW strategic development which will in time, mean that traffic levels through Woodgate are significantly reduced. On this basis, the impact of extra traffic movements on the crossing and other nearby junctions is unlikely to be significant. Although the construction phase will result in some impacts (such as noise/dust) on the local population (including new residents on the adjacent consented sites), these effects are likely to be temporary and, provided suitable mitigation measures are put in place, not significant.

The landscape impacts will not be significant in the context of the EIA regulations. The surrounding landscape is generally flat but the land to the west forming the landfill site rises significantly thus preventing any visibility from open countryside to the west. The land to the immediate east and also that beyond the A29 is subject to future residential development. The settlements of Woodgate and Westergate lie to the north and east. Landscaping and/or woodland planting to the boundaries of the site which adjoin with open countryside are likely to be sufficient to ensure that there is no significant or long-lasting impact on the wider landscape.

The characteristics of the likely impacts are not such that they are particularly significant, long lasting, affect a significant area of the district or be complex in nature. Over time, it is likely that the development will become accepted by the local population and the impacts will soften and fade.

## Cumulative Effects

Paragraph 024 (Reference ID: 4-024-20140306) of the NPPG states with regard to cumulative effects that "There are occasions where other existing or approved development may be relevant in determining whether significant effects are likely as a consequence of a proposed development".

As stated elsewhere, the site adjoins three sites with outline approvals and cumulatively together with this proposed site, the overall quantum would be up to 498 homes. This compares favourably with the indicative threshold of 1,000 dwellings for undeveloped land as set out elsewhere in this letter.

There have been other relatively recent full/reserved matters permissions for residential development on sites within close proximity including to the immediate east (Wings Nursery - 71 dwellings approved by AL/20/21/PL & AL/34/22/PL) and then south-east of the Wings site (Lee's Yard - 38 dwellings approved by AL/21/20/OUT & AL/108/22/RES). It is important to note that the proposed new development on the BEW strategic allocation is further south and east of the site and not well related to this site.

The cumulative effect of residential development in this part of the Aldingbourne area will alter the character of the area, will extend the settlement to the south/south-west and will result in a loss of countryside. It will also result in greater impacts on the local highways and greater pressure on infrastructure. However, the impacts will not be significant and any harm will be local to Aldingbourne and surrounding areas.

## Conclusion

Having considered the above factors and having had regard to the nature & scale of the proposal, the development does not have the potential to result in significant impacts on the environment. The impacts would be relatively localised and will be mitigated in accordance with standard methods including by conditions, a s106 legal agreement, the Community Infrastructure Levy, and statutory Biodiversity Net Gain. As such, the proposal does not constitute EIA development, and an Environmental Statement is not required in this instance.

This determination that an environmental statement is not required should not be seen as an indication of the Council's view on the planning merit of the proposal.

Yours sincerely



Neil Crowther  
Group Head of Planning