

Planning Officer: Mr S Davis

Planning Application Ref: BE/109/19/OUT

Location: Land east of Shripney Road & south of Haddan House, Shripney Road, Bersted, PO22 9NW

Description of works: Outline application with some matters reserved for up to 46No. dwellings together with access. This application is a Departure from the Development Plan & may affect the character & appearance of the Shripney Conservation Area

Comments on Application:

- I have considered this application by means of a desktop review, using the information and plans submitted as well as online resources. I am familiar with the tree population affected by this proposal, having assessed the same in response to an earlier expression of interest (Sept 2019).
- The applicants have employed KJF Consultancy Ltd to prepare a Tree Constraints Report and Plan for this project. The Tree Survey data is comprehensive and accords with the requirements of BS5837:2012. I am in agreement with the retention category ratings for on and off-site trees.
- Being an open-field site, it has a correspondingly low-density of tree stock, but is unusual in that the vast majority of established trees are within Category A (high value) and mature native oak of considerable landscape and ecological value. They are also the subject of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO/BN/1/19). Being confined to the site's east perimeter, it is therefore possible and should be highly desirable to design a scheme that permits those trees to exploit their full potential for the benefit of the wider community. They are important constituents of the high canopy locally, and visible from far across the agricultural fields to the east and beyond to the A259 Felpham Relief Road, a major arterial route.
- The site's north and south boundaries adjoin existing residential properties which have established trees growing from mature gardens. The site's west boundary has recently been denuded of tree cover. The provision of a detailed landscape scheme should include adequate mitigation for the loss of established roadside green infrastructure.
- Although this application seeks approval only for access and to gain support for the principle of development; an illustrative masterplan has been submitted. It is therefore timely to provide some comment on that plan and share design principles for the architect's consideration, so that a more sympathetic layout can be prepared in support of a Reserved Matters application.

General principles of design (Trees)

- Careful consideration should be given to the intended land use beneath existing canopy of established trees and the potential for further tree growth. With such a large and open site to work with I would expect a layout proposal to have placed great emphasis on eliminating future 'pressure to prune' of retained trees. Furthermore, there would need to be a compelling argument in favour of any Root Protection Area (RPA) incursion as this site clearly lends itself to a harmonious design that avoids any direct interference with established trees of current and future landscape value. This is especially relevant where there are trees of high amenity, landscape and potential heritage value, as is the case here - and which has already qualified them for statutory protection.
- I would expect the nominal root protection areas (plus a 2m buffer) to be an absolute minimum requirement for high value (Category A) trees. Ideally, they should be incorporated into an area of open space or landscape buffer and be so remote from any development such that they can potentially assume veteran status without being subject to any risk mitigation pruning works in the future.
- Trees that provide high visual amenity should be made focal points both within any development and from beyond, not obscured by built form; in addition to allocating sufficient area of undisturbed ground around their ultimate root and crown spreads.

- Surface water drainage and foul water sewer strategies are fundamental elements of any design and ought to be addressed to our satisfaction in association with layout proposals, so that we are not subsequently held hostage to flood mitigation measures which could then impact heavily on retained trees/landscape plans/open space provision.
- I draw attention to the nominal root protection areas (RPA) of retained trees and their growth potential as obvious constraints to the siting of any SUDS (e.g. attenuation pond) or introduction of subterranean utility apparatus, to include provision of adequate easements around the same.
- It should not be assumed that existing watercourses can be enhanced to provide greater capacity, where that would have a harmful effect on retained trees. Any improvements to existing or creation of new watercourses within the RPA of preserved trees must be fully considered and details provided in advance and to our satisfaction. Where there is a risk of damage to trees arising from such operations, then an alternative strategy should be proposed.

Site specific concerns in relation to the Illustrative masterplan

- I am concerned that the position or size/orientation of plots 6, 7, 31-33 incl., and 46 have high potential to impact on the health and vitality of TPO oak trees, arising from RPA incursion and future residential pressure to prune. I would like to see consideration given to enhancing and ensuring continuity of 'green corridor' along the entire eastern boundary.
- The location of the LEAP is unsatisfactory. Any proposal to install equipped play areas within and about the crown spread of large old trees is ill-advised from a safety perspective as well as increasing the likelihood of hazard abatement pruning which often leads to a diminution of those tree's landscape and ecological value.
- An alternative to the proposed footway between 33 and 34 should be found, so as to avoid costly/disruptive incursion into the RPA of a TPO oak.

Conclusions:

- The principle of development as described is certainly achievable without undue detriment to retained on and off-site trees, although we are yet to have sight of the necessary arboricultural report and plans to demonstrate this has been properly considered.
- The proposed access will not incur a significant loss of visual amenity as there is only a small amount of green infrastructure existing. The majority of roadside established trees and hedgerow have been removed in recent years.

Recommendations:

- As it stands, I see no reason to object on arboricultural grounds and so can support the principle of development.

Mark Warwick
Tree Officer / Parks and Greenspace Team