

Swallowfield Nursery – Proposed Live/work units.

Planning, Design and Access Statement August 2017

Context

The application site is located on the north side of Eastergate Lane, close to the junction with Fontwell Avenue. The nursery is located in an area that is characterised by a mixture of dwellings, commercial sites, nurseries and equestrian uses. The application site is split into two distinct sections. The western section abuts a dwelling to the west and is close to an existing dwelling to the east. To the south is a parking area with dwellings beyond and to the north is Swallowfield Horticultural nursery. The eastern end adjoins an existing dwelling to the west, a commercial yard to the east and Swallowfield nursery to the north.

A short distance to the south is the main built up area of Eastergate and to the north is the built up area of Fontwell. In the pre-submission consultation Local Plan the built up area boundary for Eastergate will move closer to the application site and will be accessible both by road and a public footpath a short distance to the east.

The overall site owned by the applicants has been used partially for a private dwelling and partly for a horticultural nursery for many years. The horticultural nursery is now developed with permanent glasshouses. The western section of the application site is occupied by some redundant polytunnels and hard-standings. This part of the site is now redundant and requires a new use or redevelopment. Its redevelopment needs to help support the existing horticultural activities on the nursery and the proposed new horticultural development in the eastern part of the application site.

In considering the future use/development of the western part of the site account needs to be taken of its position between and opposite some dwellings, in a mixed area where new house building is proposed, along with access improvements relating to the A29. The site is clearly unsuitable for unneighbourly uses or those which generate significant levels of traffic.

The applicant requires a use that will help fund the continued development of the nursery. At the same time they would like it to make a contribution towards the supply of small homes and local employment.

The eastern part of the site comprises domestic garden area and an area formerly used for a small timber glasshouse and a plant sitting out area. This area is unused and derelict in appearance.

The applicants wish to make greater use of this area for domestic and horticultural research purposes.

The Proposal

Western Part of the site

The proposal is to demolish the old polytunnels, remove the hard-standing and to develop the site for four modest sized live/work units and associated access and landscaping. The units have been designed to respect and reflect the dwelling to the east and to attract young modern businesses, such as horticultural research, landscape architects, architects, craft businesses, etc.

The whole development forms part of the Horticultural Business (Copy of viability report attached).

Eastern part of the site

A trial greenhouse and propagation area is proposed for horticultural research associated with the use of the main glasshouses and to aid the industry in general. Also proposed is an extension to the existing dwelling to provide a garden room, domestic greenhouse and open store linking the garden room and greenhouse to the main dwelling.

The area to the south of the proposed propagation building will be used for outdoor growing as part of the research work undertaken on site. One of the objectives of the unit will be to develop insect friendly plants which are not reliant on chemicals for resilience to disease.

Horticultural Plan

The proposal is an integral part of the Swallowfield Management Plan, which is explained in the Horticultural Business Plan submitted with this application. The report is self explanatory, however please advise if further clarification is required.

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

For planning purposes The National Planning Policy Framework clearly defines the following terms.

Sustainable – ensuring that better lives for ourselves doesn't mean worse lives for future generations.

Sustainable Development – is about change for the better, and not only in our built environment. (It is about the natural environment, the historic environment and higher standards of design).

Sustainable development – is about positive growth – making economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations.

To help achieve sustainable development – planning is not simply about scrutiny, it must be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which we live our lives.

Sustainable transport modes - include any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking, cycling, low and ultra low emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.

The overall planning policies of relevance to this appeal have been set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The NPPF seeks to achieve sustainable development, which has three dimensions, namely:

- An economic role;
- A social role; and
- An environmental role

The NPPF introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Where a development accords with an up-to-date Local Plan it should be approved. Local Planning Authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area. With this in mind the planning system should provide the supply of housing required to meet the needs of the present and future generations; and protect the natural and built environment. Where the development plan policies are out of date planning permission should be granted unless:

- any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the NPPF as a whole.

The Core principles of the NPPF are to adopt a pro-active approach.

In relation to the rural economy sustainable growth and the expansion of **all** types of business should be supported through conversions and well designed new buildings. In relation to land based rural businesses such as horticulture the NPPF states that their development and diversification should be promoted. This positive approach to rural businesses is to promote a strong rural economy. As stated in the NPPF the Government is committed to securing economic growth and ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support such growth. Investment should not be over-burdened by the combined requirements of policy expectations.

The NPPF also seeks to boost significantly the supply of housing. It states that local authorities should identify and update annually, a five year's worth supply of deliverable housing land with an additional 5% and ensure choice and competition in the market for land. Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of development and plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic and market trends. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. This includes policies relating to the countryside, in so far as they seek to restrict new housing.

Currently Arun District does not have an identified 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites. Accordingly, as stated in the NPPF, housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. This includes policies relating to the countryside, in so far as they seek to restrict new housing. The Appeal scheme needs to be determined on this basis.

In the recent Supreme Court Decision *Suffolk Coastal DC v Hopkins Homes Ltd & SSCLG, Richborough Estates partnership LLP and SSCLG v Cheshire East BC* it was in effect determined that if there is a lack of five year housing land supply, the policies for the supply of housing in the development are out-of-date and the tilted balance in paragraph 14 of the NPPF applies. The weight to be applied to all relevant development plan policies must be considered in the context of the circumstances of the proposal, including the shortfall in housing land supply.

It should also be noted that following the suspension of the Draft Local Plan there are no adopted policies to increase the supply of business sites in the District, contrary to the needs previously identified by the Council.

Paragraph 55 of the NPPF deals with rural housing. It states that isolated new homes in the countryside should be avoided and that housing should be located where it will maintain or enhance the vitality of rural communities.

Regarding meeting the needs of everyone the NPPF states that the planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities.

Concerning design the NPPF states that new development should function well and add to the overall quality of the area; establish a strong sense of place, optimise the potential of the site and reflect the identity of local surroundings, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation. Planning decision should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative.

In relation to transport the NPPF states that transport policies have an important role to play in facilitating sustainable development and in contributing to wider sustainability and health objectives. Smarter use of technologies can reduce the need to travel and the transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes. However

the Government realises that different policies and measures will be required in different communities and opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary from urban to rural areas.

The NPPF goes on to state that encouragement should be given to solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion. Where reasonable to do local authorities should support a pattern of development facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport.

Where a proposal is likely to generate a significant amount of traffic movements it should be accompanied by a transport assessment which takes into account the opportunities for sustainable transport modes, taking into account the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure.

Decisions relating to developments that will generate significant movement should be located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised. However this needs to take account of policies set out elsewhere in the NPPF, particularly in rural areas.

The Application scheme was designed specifically to comply with all of the above and thus to accord with the NPPF.

Arun District Local Plan 2003 (Local Plan)

Currently the Local Plan for the area comprises the Arun District Local Plan 2003, which is based upon the formerly adopted West Sussex Structure Plan, The South East Plan policies and various Government Guidance which no longer exists. It is out of date.

Paragraph 214 and 215 the NPPF advises that after April 2013 due weight should be given to relevant policies according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF.

Within the Local Plan the Appeal site is shown as being located in an area of countryside a short distance from the built up areas of Walberton and Eastergate. It is not within or close to any conservations areas, sites of special interest or protected landscapes.

Contrary to the NPPF policies GEN2 & GEN3 of the Arun District Local Plan seek to restrict most forms of development outside the defined built up area boundaries. They do not allow for new housing or business development in accordance with the NPPF.

As stated in the NPPF where relevant policies are out of date or there are no relevant policies that deal with a particular type of development permission should be granted unless:

- *“Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies set out in the NPPF as a whole.”*

As stated above, having regard to the fact that Arun District does not have an identified 5 year supply of housing sites, the countryside policies in the Local Plan are not up to date in relation to the provision and siting of new housing.

Policy GEN3 states that under-used or derelict glasshouse and polytunnels will not be considered suitable for non-agricultural development. Again this is contrary to the NPPF, which seeks to allow the redevelopment of underused sites; optimise the development potential of sites; allow for a wide range of uses in the rural area and to secure sustainable forms of development.

Policy GEN3 does however allow for the diversification of the rural economy, which includes buildings associated with existing horticultural businesses and the creation of new business opportunities to support existing rural businesses.

Policy DEV 3 allows for new glasshouse developments but does not address research buildings associated with glasshouse developments.

Policy DEV19 allows for the extension of existing dwellings. Extensions should be visually subservient to the main dwelling and should not harm the character of the street.

Policy GEN7 relates to the form of new development, encouraging schemes displaying high quality design and layout. It states that development will be permitted provided it (in brief):

- Makes efficient use of land or buildings;
- Responds positively to the identified characteristics and resources of the site and the area;
- Promotes sustainable development;
- Does not harm the living conditions of existing residents;
- Takes account of any adverse impacts from adjoining land uses;
- Makes a material contribution to the local environment;
- Allows safe movement of pedestrians and vehicles, giving priority to pedestrians; and
- Provides adequate vehicle parking.

The proposed horticultural building and associated access and the proposed domestic extension fully comply with the above policies. The proposed live/work units comply with the aims and criteria of most of the above policies. At the same time, having regard to the absence of any policies in the Local Plan that allow for rural live/work units, the proposal should be approved unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies set out in the NPPF as a whole.

Arun Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (Pre-submission consultation)

Due to its draft status this Plan currently carries little weight. A significant number of the objections and comments have already been made concerning its contents, including policies C SP1, T DM1 & SD SP2.

SD SP1 –	This policy states that the Council will apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF. Applications which will help achieve the Council's central aim of increasing employment density will be supported. Where the Plan has no policies relating to a particular form of development it will be determined in accordance with the NPPF.
LAN DM1 –	Development which preserves or enhances the landscape character will be permitted.
EMP SP1 –	Promotes economic growth and the provision of a flexible supply of employment workspace to meet employment and employer generated needs.
EMP DM1 –	Allow for new employment in the rural area where it is to meet the needs of a local firm and there are no other available sites in the built up area (This is contrary to the more flexible approach in the NPPF). Or
As part of a farm diversification plan and the scheme will	
-	Benefit the local economy
-	Where possible use an existing building
-	Any new buildings are appropriately designed
-	New buildings are sited adjacent to existing buildings
-	The scheme will not harm the character or appearance of the countryside
-	The scheme will not affect the character or safety of rural roads.
Skills SP1 –	The Council will welcome developments which address:
-	Address the barriers to employment for economically inactive people.
-	Provide child care opportunities.
D SP1 –	The scheme achieves a high quality in design
D DM1 -	The scheme improves the character of the area and the living conditions of existing residents.
ECC SP2 –	Employment and housing schemes meet objectives relating to climate change.
T SP1 –	Growth in the economic base should reduce congestion and promote healthy lifestyles.
HOR DM1 –	Allows for the redevelopment of under-used, redundant or derelict glasshouses and polytunnels for uses which support the rural economy. Applications for non-horticultural uses will be considered on a case by case basis. It also allows for new glasshouses and associated development.

- D DM\$ - This policy allows for residential extensions which relate appropriately to the host dwelling and relate appropriately to their surroundings

Barnham and Eastergate Neighbourhood Plan 2014 - 2029

This Plan identifies the challenges to the local economy and the importance of local employment in horticulture and employment, as well as the need for non-seasonal employment, particularly for young people. New economic development should be encouraged and supported. The Plan encourages small business start ups and new business opportunities.

At the same time the Plan advises that there should be no more large scale housing schemes or housing estates. Where new housing takes place it should respect the character of its surroundings.

These matters are all fully addressed in policies set out in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Evaluation

Constraints

- Rural location
- The extent of the developed site.
- Its proximity to other dwellings
- The character and appearance of the adjacent dwellings
- The nature of surrounding area

Opportunities

- To bring two redundant parts of the overall site back into use
- To develop further the existing horticultural business
- To dramatically improve the condition and use of the site in the long term
- To provide homes for four local families at a time when new house building levels are unacceptably low
- To provide employment for local tradesmen during the construction of the development
- To provide employment space to enable the occupiers of the dwellings to work full or part time from their homes
- To provide direct employment in horticultural research, which will aid the industry in general.
- To help meet the housing needs of Arun District
- To supplement the Horticultural income
- To enhance the living conditions of the occupiers of the dwelling at Swallowfield nursery

Location/Accessibility

This part of Eastergate Lane is located close to existing and proposed dwellings and the main built up area of Eastergate. It is a lightly trafficked road, with good accessibility to the A24 and A29, which is a main bus routes. A short distance to the east is a public footpath which provides access to the main built up area of Eastergate and the services and facilities it offers.

There are a number of recent and planned developments in the immediate area. They include the A 29 by-pass and new built residential development and the large planned housing area a short distance to the south. These developments bring the built up area of Eastergate significantly closer to the application site.

Amount

The existing polytunnels on the site have a gross floor area of some 1014m². The proposed live work units would have a gross floor area of 604m².

The proposed propagation and research building would have a floor area of 112m².

The proposed garden room will have a floor area of 42m², the greenhouse will have a floor area of 26.3m² and the open covered link/store will have a floor area of 34m².

Appearance and scale

The western section of the existing site is utilitarian and degraded and detracts from the setting of the adjacent dwellings and the entrance to the nursery.

The proposed southernmost live/work units would follow the front building line of the dwelling to the west, but would be set back from the front building line of the dwelling to the east. The rear live/work units would be set further to the north in a part of the site that is well screened by existing hedges.

The proposed live/work buildings have been designed to reflect the dwelling to the east and to be modern and imaginative. They would be constructed from a mixture of plain tiles, stock bricks and powder coated aluminium fenestration. The accommodation in the roof-space would be served by roof-lights.

The four units would face into a small parking area, which would be screened from public view and each unit would have a modest sized rear garden.

Within the parking and front garden area would be 12 car parking spaces, including two disabled spaces and two electric car charging points. Cycle storage would be in small garden sheds and the refuse bins would be stored at the entrance to the site.

The proposed propagation building would be located in an area that is currently unused and semi-derelict. Previously it was developed and used for a timber glasshouse and plant

standing area. The proposed building would be screened from public viewpoints by the trees and hedges along the southern boundary of the site. The proposed domestic extension would be sited between the existing house and the proposed propagation building in an area that has always been used for domestic garden and is currently occupied by two sheds. This extension would similarly be screened from the road by existing planting. Both of these buildings would be set against the backcloth of the expansive and tall glasshouse several metres to the north.

Both of these buildings have been designed to respect and reflect the existing dwelling, farm office and proposed live/work units.

As a result of these factors the proposed scheme would respect and blend in readily with the street scene, the setting of the adjacent dwellings, farm office, horticultural buildings and the wider countryside. In reality the buildings would not be seen from the street scene or the existing nursery, due to the strong boundary planting and the screening afforded by existing buildings.

In conclusion the scheme would be readily assimilated into its surroundings, both visually and in terms of use.

Ecology

The existing polytunnels are not used by bats or barn owls, etc. and the site is visually hard and utilitarian. It is not attractive to wildlife.

With the proposal the proposed gardens would be attractive to birds, insects and small mammals.

The propagation unit will benefit wildlife as modern research is directed at developing insect friendly plants that are resistant to disease without chemical intervention.

Overall the scheme will improve the ecological value of the site and the area in general.

Access

Live/work units & existing dwelling

Access to the site is from Eastergate Lane. The traffic likely to be generated by four small live/work units would be negligible.

The scheme has been designed to facilitate wheelchair access at ground floor level and the external area is flat and suitable for disabled access.

Eastern part of the site

The propagation unit will be served by new access off Eastergate Lane. Both the access to the building and the building itself will be wheelchair accessible. AQ disabled toilet is available in the main nursery buildings.

Flood Risk Assessment

The site is not in an area that has been shown to be at risk of flooding. At the same time the scheme will not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

With the provision of soft planted gardens the proposal will improve surface water drainage on the site..

Economic factors

Currently the site is redundant and its maintenance is a financial burden on the Horticultural business.

The proposed scheme would provide employment for local trades persons during the demolition and construction stages. Once constructed the live/work units would represent an investment for the nursery, that could be borrowed against for necessary farm funding.

The rental income from the live/work units would supplement the nursery's income in the long term.

The live work units would provide employment workspace for four young businesses.

The proposed research unit would provide direct local employment and would benefit the horticultural businesses in the immediate and wider area.

Thus, the proposal would make a significant contribution to the local and rural economy, as specifically encouraged by the NPPE.

Social factors

The proposal would provide four small local rural homes, with facilities where the occupants could run their own businesses, or work for other businesses. The units would be located in a quiet and attractive location within a cluster of rural dwellings and businesses. The units would also be just a short distance from the strategic road network and a wide range of community facilities. These facilities are to be increased over the next few years as a result of the large housing land allocations proposed a short distance to the south of the site. Despite the expected growth in population few measures have been put in place to increase employment opportunities and employment floor space in the locality. No new specific commercial allocations are proposed in the locality.

The proposed horticultural research building would provide direct local employment and would benefit the local horticultural industry.

The scheme would make a small, yet valuable contribution to the supply of housing and in particular rural housing in Arun. It will help make up the shortfall in house building and the historic shortage of housing land supply in Arun.

Bins and Cycles

The scheme includes provision for the storage of refuse and recycling bins as shown on the site plans. The rear gardens to the live/work units would contain garden sheds for cycle storage. The domestic bins would include 1No 120 litre wheelie bin for general waste and 1No. 120 litre wheelie bin for recycling – for each unit.

Energy Efficiency

By providing live/work units the scheme would reduce the need for the occupants of the dwellings to travel.

The site is located within easy walking distance of local bus stops and within easy cycling distance of a range of community facilities.

The units would be constructed to Code for Sustainable homes level 4.

The Units would benefit from an electric car power point.

The business units

The proposed live/work business units would be suitable for B1 office based activities, such as horticultural research, landscape architects, surveyors, internet based businesses and consultants in a wide range of industries. They would also be suitable for small craft industries such as pottery, metal work, paintings, etc.

As more and more people become self employed the demand for such space will increase. The provision of work/live units reduces traffic and makes for energy efficiency with one building providing work and domestic heat, lighting etc.

The proposed propagation unit will be used to develop plants which require less fertilizers and pesticides and to increase crop yield.

The overall proposal is thus highly sustainable.

Sustainability Conclusion

The scheme readily complies with the economic, social and environmental roles of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF and the emerging Local Plan. It readily complies with the objectives of the environmental and economic policies set out in the

adopted and emerging local plans and with the strategic, environmental and economic policies set out in the emerging Local Plan. Any conflict with the 2003 Local Plan would be materially outweighed by the significant benefits that would result from the scheme.

Recently a live/work scheme in Lidsey was allowed at Appeal. In allowing the Appeal the appointed Inspector concluded:

“Paragraph 6 of the Framework states that the policies in the Framework must be taken as a whole in order to ascertain what sustainable development means in practice. Here paragraph 17 of the Framework also requires account to be taken of the different⁵ roles of different areas and to promote the vitality and support thriving rural communities. Similarly, paragraph 34 of the Framework also stipulates that provisions for other policies set out elsewhere in the Framework must be considered alongside minimising travel, particularly those relating to rural area.

Furthermore paragraph 28 of the Framework states that planning policies should support economic growth in rural area.....I am satisfied for the reasons given above that, and taking into account the Framework as a whole, the proposed development would amount to sustainable development and that there would be no conflict with paragraphs 17, 28 and 34 of the Framework.”