

CONSULTEE RESPONSE (Arun District Council - Arboriculturist)

Date of report: 4th September 2026

Reference: WA/51/26/RES

Proposal: Approval of reserved matters following the grant of outline planning permission WA/35/23/OUT, for the construction of 95 no. new homes, access, new pedestrian and cycle links, open space, landscaping, habitat creation, drainage features and associated groundworks and infrastructure, including details relating to the Sensitive Lighting Strategy, POS details and Part M Compliance. This application is in CIL Zone 3 and is CIL Liable as new dwellings.

Location: Land East of Wandleys Lane, Fontwell

Case Officer: Mr S Davis

BACKGROUND

I have considered this application by means of a desktop review, using the information and plans submitted as well as online resources. Previous consideration from site and familiarity with surrounding area provide further insight to the proposal.

My understanding is the matters under consideration relate to layout, scale, appearance and landscaping; main access into the site having been determined at the outline stage following appeal - APP/C3810/W/24/3349836

TREE SURVEY INFORMATION

The applicants have employed Aspect Arboriculture Ltd. to prepare an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) along with a Tree Protection Plan (TPP) for this project.

AMS para. 1.1.2 states an earlier Arboricultural Impact Assessment (important for the quantification and subsequent appreciation of impacts from the proposal) has been approved, although I find no such endorsement in the Inspector's Decision or in the agreed conditions following the aforementioned appeal.

I have relied upon the only AIA available to me, dated April 2023 (ref. 9884_AIA.001 Rev A) and submitted at outline stage, from which to review the applicant's understanding of the impacts arising. That is not entirely satisfactory, although I am reassured by tree survey data having been updated to March 2026 (Appendix D).

Assuming the AIA remains entirely relevant, I draw attention to the following key findings:

All high value individual and groups of trees (retention category A and/or the subject of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO)) are to be retained, with the exception of two ash west of the main access and approved for removal. The remaining large majority grow from neighbouring residential properties, on or close to boundary and overlap the site both above and below ground.

The focus of tree removals and pruning operations are to facilitate construction of the approved main access and highway improvement works along Wandleys Lane.

AIA para. 3.1.5 states: '*...there are no veteran trees, nor any parcels of designated ancient woodland within influence of the application area.*'

I find this at odds with their recognition of this irreplaceable habitat elsewhere in the document, as the red line perimeter (application area) on location plan directly abuts the parcel of land known as Wandleys Copse, a designated ancient woodland. Both roots and branches overlap the development site.

Furthermore, it is conceivable due to their size and age, one (e.g. T23) or more of the high value (BS5837:2012 retention category A) off-site oaks overlapping from properties in West Walberton Lane possess characteristics hitherto unobserved due to survey limitations, that would qualify them as veterans. A precautionary approach is therefore necessary (i.e. – to be treated as veterans and the RPA upgraded to a buffer zone of min. 15x stem diameter or 5m beyond crown spread, whichever is greater, until such time as their status is absolutely established to the contrary).

The current application is supported with an AMS and TPP, which reflect the proposed layout, and to which I now turn my attention.

To visualise the arboricultural implications of this proposal, I have considered the following plans: Site Layout Area Plan, dwg. no: 250515/SL13 Rev H and Tree Protection Plans, dwg. no. 12753 TPP 01 Rev A (x3).

There is no mention in the AMS of TPO/WA/1/24, which affects individual oak trees T18, T19 & T23 (their refs.) and TPO/WA/1/23 a woodland order which affects the whole of Wandleys Copse (ref. W1). Those individuals may be referenced on a TPP but I cannot confirm due to the poor resolution under magnification of the copies available to me.

There are other high value trees overlapping the site to be afforded special consideration, given the following references: T11, T12, T13, T17 & T20.

ANCIENT WOODLAND & VETERAN TREES (incl. Government guidance)

Current Government guidance (*in italic font*) for making planning decisions in respect of veteran trees can be found in its entirety on their webpages: [Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The guidance is a material planning consideration for local planning authorities.

Ancient Woodland

Larger buffer zones are more likely to be needed if the surrounding area is:

- *less densely wooded*
- *close to residential areas*
- *steeply sloped*

Veteran Trees

There must be wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy in place, before granting planning permission where development will result in the loss or deterioration of veteran trees.

In the absence of confirmed tree status, the following trees should be afforded a buffer zone, designed into the scheme, at 15x stem diameter or 5m beyond canopy edge – whichever is greater. Stem diameters (currently estimated) will need to be accurately measured to determine the permitted extent of buffer zone: T11, T12, T13, T17, T18, T19 & T20.

- *Sustainable drainage schemes should not affect root protection areas or facilitate harmful effects such as from an altered water table.*
 - *Development proposals including gardens within a buffer zone should not be approved.*
-
- The Ancient Woodland (AW) status of Wandleys Copse is recognised in the AMS although the proposed 15metre buffer (AWB) is the least that should be implemented to avoid root damage, however, there are many above ground impacts from development which can be harmful to the flora and fauna which depend on this unique and irreplaceable habitat.
 - It seems necessary to increase the extent of buffer zone given the proposed change of land use (arable agricultural to residential) and less densely wooded surrounding areas.

- It is essential that proposed ecological enhancement within (and preferably adjacent) the buffer zone is sufficiently detailed and found compatible with preservation and enhancement of the AW habitat. Public access should be restricted to avoid trampling within the AWB.

Considering the above guidance, the proposed layout seemingly presents the following direct and indirect threats to irreplaceable habitats:

1. Dwellings, supporting road network and surface water drainage infrastructure is proposed adjacent the AWB. Indeed, both attenuation basins 1 & 2 are partly within.
 2. Changes to the water table or drainage. Drainage Plans suggest the existing exceedance flow across the site is toward the south and east, affecting both habitats and important trees (TPO).
 3. RPA +2m buffer - incursion from construction.
 4. Increasing levels of air and light pollution, noise and vibration
-
5. Increasing disturbance to wildlife, such as noise from additional people and traffic
 6. Increasing the amount of dust, light, water, air and soil pollution
-

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT(S)

Sites of this size and generally open nature but with established landscape features (trees and hedgerow), should be subject to the higher-level development principles, as promoted in our Supplementary Planning Documents. Those give instruction for avoiding Root Protection Area (RPA) incursion and providing further insurance with the use of buffer zones (a minimum of 2metres to be effective). **Arun District Public Open Space, Playing Pitches and Built Facilities** (Appendix 9) and **Arun Design Guide** (E.02 Landscape Structures & Trees, p62) - [Supplementary Planning Documents \(SPDs\) and other guidance | Arun District Council](#).

A buffer of 2m beyond their calculated RPA should be implemented for trees T11 – T25, if they have not been afforded veteran tree status. This to ensure no construction creep during the creation of attenuation basin 2 and demand a relocation of proposed subterranean utility apparatus to outside of this greater construction exclusion zone (CEZ).

Established oak trees around the site are already important constituents of the local landscape and can also provide visual amenity and mature outlook to any scheme, so must be afforded sufficient room to allow future growth (above and below ground level) without

constraint if they are to flourish post-development. Those trees and their associated hedgerow, have significant landscape value and are strategically important for the accrual of ecological and environmental benefits for this site and its environs.

DRAINAGE

It is for the applicant to demonstrate their sustainable drainage scheme will not affect root protection areas or facilitate harmful effects such as from an altered water table, where relating to veteran trees or ancient woodland.

There does not appear to be an approved surface water drainage strategy for the site. This fundamental element of the design 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) and any required additional buffer of retained trees and their growth potential as obvious constraints to the siting of any SUDS feature, soakaway or introduction of subterranean utility apparatus. The provision of appropriate buffer/easement around such features must also take into account that growth potential (roots), to limit the risk of damage occurring during future maintenance of the same, from compaction/contamination of the soil structure.

CONCLUSIONS:

At first glance and in general terms the scheme presents as being of low arboricultural impact, but there are risks to high value assets associated with supporting the current layout proposal, where further necessary investigations and consideration of surface water treatment are outstanding.

The absence of **buffer zones around RPAs** as promoted within our Supplementary Planning Documents: Arun District Public Open Space, Playing Pitches and Built Facilities (Appendix 9) and emerging Arun Design Guide (E.02 Landscape Structures & Trees, p62) to eliminate risk of construction activity 'spilling over', is disappointing but can and **should be incorporated in a revised layout** and without impacting adversely on the overall design.

The mature high value trees, exclusively native oak, on the east boundary of the site (rear of properties in West Walberton Lane) should be considered as veteran and their RPA set at

15metres or 5m beyond crown spread, whichever is greater, unless established to the contrary.

The AWB is the least extent permitted and does not adequately reflect the potential for harm to irreplaceable habitat, and so should be extended.

The construction of swales within the AWB is incompatible with guidance.

In summary, the proposal is seemingly in conflict with local plan policy ENV DM4.

RECOMMENDATION:

As it stands, I am unable to lend this scheme my support and so register an **OBJECTION**.

If the application is to be approved despite my objection, please advise accordingly and I will forward a set of conditions to be included in the decision notice.

Mark Warwick
Principal Tree Officer
Environment and Climate Change

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Arun District Council, Civic Centre, Maltravers Rd
Littlehampton, West Sussex, BN17 5LF
www.arun.gov.uk

To register to receive notification of planning applications in your area please go to
<https://www1.arun.gov.uk/planning-application-finder>



Our priorities...

 Improving the wellbeing of Arun	 Delivering the right homes in the right places	 Supporting our environment to support us	 Fulfilling Arun's economic potential	 Our core foundations	 
---	--	--	--	---	--

From: Mark Warwick [REDACTED]
Sent: 04 September 2026 16:14
To: Planning.Responses <Planning.Responses@arun.gov.uk>
Cc: Simon Davis <Simon.Davis@arun.gov.uk>
Subject: WA/51/26/RES

Please find attached my report for your consideration.

Kind regards

Mark Warwick
Principal Tree Officer, Environment and Climate Change

Arun District Council, Civic Centre, Maltravers Rd

Littlehampton, West Sussex, BN17 5LF

www.arun.gov.uk