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Date: 25th August 2021

Please ask for: Mr S Davis

Tel: 01903 737874

Your Ref:

Our Ref: Y/116/21/ESO

Dear Ms Jackson,

Screening opinion request for proposed hybrid application for 200 dwellings (Phase 1 approximately 30 dwellings in detail) with access roads, pedestrian paths, open space, landscaping and sustainable urban drainage.

Land West of Bilsham Road Yapton

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 in 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 the site area of approx. 12 hectares exceeds the threshold of 5ha and the number of dwellings (200) exceeds the threshold of 150.

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

I concur with observations in the Campbell Reith Screening Request document that there are no statutory designated sites for nature conservation on or within 2km of the site.

Paragraph: 017 (Reference ID: 4-017-20170728) of the PPG states:- "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 considered to be Schedule 2 development. In the case of schedule 2, an EIA is not automatically required unless the local planning authority considers that the 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 in Schedule 2 requires 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).

It is noted that the paragraph 018 (reference ID: 4-018-20170728) of the PPG states:

"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 state:- "Environmental Impact Assessment is unlikely to be required for the redevelopment 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 m² 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 (ii) or (iii). Our Screening Response continues in response to the headings given within Schedule 3.

(1) Location of the Development

The site is in agricultural use and as according to the Figure 2 map in the Yapton Neighbourhood Development Plan (page xix) is shown as being half grade 1 and half grade 2. The site is bordered on its east side by a hedgerow to Bilsham Road whilst the west boundary comprises a field edge and hedgerow. The north boundary is with residential allocated land for which outline planning permission has been granted for 250 homes. This boundary is fenced with no hedgerow. There is no southern boundary as the site is in a larger field area which continues southwards.

There are some trees in the east and west hedges but none in the main body of the site. The nearest protected trees are in the allocated residential site to the north and northwest. The site is crossed (north to south) by the Ryebank Rife, an open stream. There is a footpath running down the western boundary (YAP/156/1/2) and along the southern boundary of the field of which the site is a part. The site is understood to be predominantly flat but with levels falling generally south and towards the Rife.

The site lies in current Flood Zone 1 but there is zone 2 and 3 flood risk along the line of the Rife. This is predicted to enlarge in the future only slightly with the vast majority of the site remaining in flood zone 1 by 2111. The site is not affected by any wildlife designations although the land would provide some wildlife habitat particularly along the line of the Rife and to the existing field margins/hedgerows.

The site does not include any heritage assets with the nearest being at the junction of Bilsham Road/Bilsham Lane and along Bilsham Lane to the south with intervening land in between.

It is not considered this is an environmentally sensitive site, and that any environmental impacts are likely to be local in nature.

(2) Characteristics of the Development

The development comprises up to 200 dwellings, associated parking, road/footway provision, foot/cycle paths, public open space, play provision, landscaping, drainage features and ancillary works. The scale is indicated to be two storeys to reflect the character of the area. It is proposed to take vehicular access via a priority junction to Bilsham Road with pedestrian/cycle access points to other boundaries.

It is understood any application will be supported by a landscape strategy which will demonstrate the integration of natural features (such as the Rife) and to propose on and off-site landscaping to provide screening and biodiversity net gain.

It is not considered that the characteristics of the development are likely to be significant in the context of the EIA regulations.

(3) Characteristics of the Potential Impacts

It is not considered the characteristics of the likely impacts are such that they are particularly significant, or long lasting, that they affect a significant area of the district or that they are complex in nature.

It is not considered likely that the development results in any significant harm to ecological interests and that any harm can be mitigated through planning conditions and through the approval of an appropriate layout (such as by the areas of open space, drainage features and integration of the Rife). The site is not at risk of flooding and 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 whilst those in the wider landscape will be protected as a result of the distance to them and potential landscape improvements.

Although there will be a new access and consequentially a significant and noticeable increase in vehicular and other modes of traffic accessing the site, it is not considered this impact will be significant (in the context of the EIA Regulations). The impact of additional traffic on the adjacent road will not itself be particularly noticeable.

There may be a more noticeable impact on existing levels of queuing traffic on Bilsham Road where it meets the A259. It is noted that you say there are no transport routes on or around the location which are susceptible to congestion and the assessment ignores this location which is reasonably close to the site. Notwithstanding, it is likely that over time, the development will become accepted by the local population and the impacts will soften and fade.

It is not considered that landscape impacts will be significant in the context of the EIA regulations. The surrounding landscape is flat, and forms developed countryside with the village of Yapton to the north/east and nearby Barnham to the west. 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.

Although the construction phase will result in some impacts (such as noise/dust) on the local population, these effects are likely to be temporary and, provided suitable mitigation measures are put in place, not significant.

Cumulative Effects

It is noted the PPG paragraph 024 (Reference ID: 4-024-20140306) states with regard to cumulative effects:- "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".

There have been a number of major residential approvals within the Yapton area in recent times:

- (1) The strategic allocation on land to the north and north east (total of 700 dwellings, with 250 of these on the adjoining part);
- (2) Stakers Farm & Land North of Yapton Primary School sites on North End Road (70 & 38 dwellings);
- (3) Clays Farm on North End Road (33 dwellings);
- (4) Land At Street Buildings on North End Road (45 dwellings);
- (5) Land to the south of Ford Lane & East of North End Road (100 dwellings);
- (6) Land at Bonhams Field, Main Road (56 dwellings); and
- (7) Land off Burndell Road (108 dwellings).

The above all have outline and, in most cases, reserved matters permission also (excepting (1)) and some of them have been commenced. It is considered that the cumulative effect of new residential development in Yapton will alter the character of the area, result in greater impacts on the local highways and greater pressure on existing infrastructure. However, it is not considered that the proposed 200 houses, when considered alongside the existing approved developments, will result in any significant impacts and that any harm will be local to Yapton and the surrounding area.

Conclusion

Having considered the above factors and having had regard to the nature & scale of the proposal, it is not considered that the proposed development has the potential to result in significant impacts on the environment. The impacts would be relatively small-scale and localised and will be mitigated in accordance with standard methods including by conditions, a s106 legal agreement and the Community Infrastructure Levy. As such, it is considered that the proposal does not constitute EIA development and as such 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