

Dear Tom

I refer to our recent meeting to discuss the above proposal and apologies for the delay in providing a written note. As indicated, please see the following comments confirming the main points that we talked about.

Principle

The site is located within the built up area of East Grinstead as defined by the Mid Sussex District Plan. Policy DP6 of the District Plan states in part that:

“Development will be permitted within towns and villages with defined built-up area boundaries. Any infilling and redevelopment will be required to demonstrate that it is of an appropriate nature and scale (with particular regard to DP26: Character and Design), and not cause harm to the character and function of the settlement.”

At neighbourhood plan level the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan also allows for the principle of development within the built up area. Policy EG5 states:

“The East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan area is subject to significant environmental and infrastructure constraints and as a result new housing development on land defined as ‘previously developed,’ where the site is predominantly previously developed or is green infrastructure that can be demonstrated to be surplus to requirements will be supported subject to the criteria below and compliance with other policies within the plan.

Other proposals for new housing development will only be supported if:

- a) The proposed development contributes to sustainable development;*
- b) An application is supported by robust assessment of the environmental and visual impact of the proposal and include as necessary appropriate mitigation measures.*
- c) An application is supported by a robust assessment of the impact of the proposal upon the local highway network and it can be demonstrated that the proposal will not cause a severe cumulative impact in terms of road safety and increased congestion after proposed mitigation is taken into account;*
- d) The proposal complies with design guidance contained in policy EG3 or a relevant Development Brief;*
- e) The proposal provides a mix of tenure types including private, social rented and shared equity (intermediate);*
- f) Contributions are made towards SANG and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM); and*
- g) The proposal meets its own infrastructure needs.”*

Although the principle is acceptable, the above policies make clear that such development is only acceptable when other detailed criteria are also met.

Design and Visual Impact

The visual impact of proposal is going to be one of the main issues. Policy DP6 above references Policy DP26 which sets out the character and design requirements and states that:

“All development and surrounding spaces, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings and replacement dwellings, will be well designed and reflect the distinctive character of the towns and villages while being sensitive to the countryside. All applicants will be required to demonstrate that development:

- is of high quality design and layout and includes appropriate landscaping and greenspace;*
- contributes positively to, and clearly defines, public and private realms and should normally be designed with active building frontages facing streets and public open spaces to animate and provide natural surveillance;*
- creates a sense of place while addressing the character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape;*
- protects open spaces, trees and gardens that contribute to the character of the area;*
- protects valued townscapes and the separate identity and character of towns and villages;*
- does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new dwellings, including taking account of the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, and noise, air and light pollution (see Policy DP29);*
- creates a pedestrian-friendly layout that is safe, well connected, legible and accessible;*
- incorporates well integrated parking that does not dominate the street environment, particularly where high density housing is proposed;*
- positively addresses sustainability considerations in the layout and the building design;*
- take the opportunity to encourage community interaction by creating layouts with a strong neighbourhood focus/centre; larger (300+ unit) schemes will also normally be expected to incorporate a mixed use element;*
- optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development.”*

The design requirements of EG3 of the Neighbourhood Plan will also need to be met.

I am pleased to see that the proposals have been modified since we first met as that original iteration was proposing too much development for the site.

The Urban Designer has commented on the submissions but would really need more information to provide more detailed comments:

“There is still insufficient information to comment on the design. No proposed elevations have been supplied of the front and rear buildings, and I would expect the former to be shown in context with adjacent buildings. Also there are no proposed floorplans/roof plan of the street frontage building and the floorplans for the rear building are v sketchy and incomplete as it does not show the entrance and vertical circulation core.

This is a constrained site which appears to offer insufficient outlook/privacy/natural light. We need Irene/Sarah's comments as the rear building seems to be unacceptably close to the mature trees on the northern boundary (that flank Beeching Way) which is especially problematic as this offers the principal aspect for the flats. The front and the rear buildings also look uncomfortably close to each other so I would also be interested to have your consideration of the residential amenity."

To summarise on this issue, the design and visual impact will be a key issue but it is difficult to accurately assess this impact at present given the limited information that has been provided in terms of elevations but also other supporting plans.

Residential Amenity

The significant harm test of Policy DP26 applies to neighbouring residents and future residents. There will need to be appropriate separation distances between the proposed and existing properties to minimise overlooking and maintain privacy. This is normally considered to be a minimum 21 metre distance.

The level of outdoor amenity space will need to be made clear. It appears each of the units will have a balcony whilst I assume the gardens are to be communal for all of the residents not just the new build?

The national space standards will be applied to all of the properties as per Policy DP27 and we will need to be satisfied that each unit has sufficient natural light and outlook.

Highways

I expect one of the key issues for local residents will be the construction impact so this is also a residential amenity issue. A Construction Management Plan will be required but West Sussex as the highways authority will be leading on this and the acceptability of the permanent access arrangements. A potential major issue here, particularly again I suspect with local residents, will be the loss of the existing car parking spaces coupled with the increased demand from the new dwellings. As advised it is the West Sussex County Council Parking Standards, followed by MSDC, that will be applied here. You should provide as much detail as possible about the existing spaces and their users to help inform the assessment of any displacement.

Other Issues

There are a number of other relevant issues that would be assessed upon detailed submissions made under a planning application which include:

- The District Plan and East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan form the Development Plan and contain a number of relevant policies, not specifically referenced above, that need to be complied with.
- The Mid Sussex Design Guide is an adopted SPD that the proposals will need to accord with <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/5611/mid-sussex-design-guide-spd.pdf>

- Drainage; It is recommended that the drainage proposals for the site are discussed with our drainage team prior to submissions of the application.
- Accessibility; Compliance with Policy DP28 will need to be demonstrated
 - Affordable Housing: The Council will seek the provision of a minimum of 30% on-site affordable housing for all residential developments providing 11 dwellings or more, or a maximum combined gross floorspace of more than 1,000m². Please see DP31.
 - Ecology: It appears to me that the site could provide a net gain to biodiversity as per DP38 of the District Plan so any application should set out how this can be achieved.
- Infrastructure; Please see the Council's Development Infrastructure and Contributions SPD for the applicable contributions: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/3614/development-infrastructure-and-contributions-spd.pdf>
- SAMM and SANG will also be needed in this case: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-building/protecting-ashdown-forest/>
- Sustainability; Compliance with Policy DP39 will need to be demonstrated
- Consultation; pre-application consultations with neighbours and directly with East Grinstead Town Council is encouraged and your findings of such an exercise can be reflected in your submission.

The views expressed in this email and at our meeting are at officer level only and do not prejudice the Council from making whatever decision it considered appropriate on any application subsequently submitted.

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Kind regards

Stuart

Stuart Malcolm BA (Hons) Dip MA
 Senior Planning Officer
 Development Management
 Mid Sussex District Council
 01444 477293

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