

# MITCHELSWOOD FARM, NEWICK

## PLANNING STATEMENT

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement is prepared on behalf of DLA Delivery in relation to an application for outline planning permission, with all matters reserved with the exception of access, for up to 63 dwellings with open space, along with related works and infrastructure, on Mitchelswood Farm.

1.2 This Planning Statement addresses the following issues:

- the site's location and physical context;
- the proposed development;
- the national, regional and local planning policies that form the context for the proposal; and
- an assessment of the application proposals in the light of those policies.

### The Application

1.3 The application is submitted in outline, with all matters reserved with the exception of access, for:

- up to 63 dwellings;
- green infrastructure including informal open space and landscaped areas;
- connections to the surrounding highway and footpath network;
- infrastructure and utilities including car parking; and
- demolition of all existing buildings and structures on site.

1.4 The formal **description of development** comprises:

**Outline Planning Permission, to provide up to 63 Residential Dwellings (including Affordable Housing), Open Space and Landscaping, New Vehicular and Pedestrian Accesses and Car Parking, following the demolition of existing buildings on site.**

1.5 Up to a policy compliant number of the new dwellings will be affordable in nature (including affordable rent) and providing a mix of house types. The precise nature of the affordable housing provision will be subject to negotiation and detailed agreement with Lewes District Council.

1.6 Particular care and attention has been paid in the design evolution process to take account of the context presented by the site, the advice and guidance set out in the Council's policies and guidance insofar as they are relevant, the advice and guidance set out by Lewes District Council.

### Principal Context for the Planning Application

- 1.7 The principal planning context for the consideration of the application proposals is the National Planning Policy Framework, particularly in the absence of an up to date local development plan document for Lewes District.
- 1.8 The National Planning Policy (NPPF) introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable development and confirms that *“housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development”* (para 49).
- 1.9 A fundamental dimension to the promotion of sustainable development in the NPPF is the unbending requirement for local planning authorities to provide the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations. It is a “core planning principle” to *“proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs”* (para 17).
- 1.10 To this end it is a core planning principle also to *“boost significantly the supply of housing”* (para 47) and to deliver a wide choice of new homes including, specifically, homes to meet affordable housing needs (para 50).
- 1.11 The applicants are committed to the early delivery of the site for development. There are no constraints to prevent the development proposals delivering new homes (both private and affordable) at the earliest opportunity, thereby contributing fundamentally to the achievement of the core objectives of the NPPF. It is anticipated that the grant of planning permission for the proposals would allow an early commencement on site and the completion and occupation of up to 450 new dwellings (with up to 30% in affordable tenures – including affordable rent), within approximately five years of commencement.
- 1.12 Paragraph 14 of the NPPF provides the specific guidance as to how the presumption in favour of sustainable development is to apply in decision making on applications. Proposals in accord with the development plan are to be approved without delay. Where the development plan is silent or out of date, then permission should also be granted unless:
- *“any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in this Framework when taken as a whole”* [Exception 1];
  - *“specific policies in this Framework indicate that development should be restricted”* [Exception 2].

- 1.13 The plan was adopted in 2003 and was based on evidence of housing need compiled significantly before that. Planning for the period up to 2010/11, it is considered out of date.
- 1.14 In relation to Exception 1, the NPPF placed an added and new onus on the decision maker to determine that adverse impacts should “*significantly and demonstrably outweigh*” the benefits of a proposal. This is a very stiff test placed on decision makers.
- 1.15 For the reasons set out in this statement, it is manifestly the case that no such demonstrable and significant adverse impacts exist to set against the considerable benefits arising from the development. The provision of new homes to meet the needs of the District and to offset the persistent and ongoing under supply of housing in the District are of the utmost importance in the determining of this application. Moreover, for the reasons set out in this statement, and other application documents, the application site is entirely suitable and appropriate for the development proposed.
- 1.16 In relation to Exception 2, Footnote 9 of the NPPF sets out the policies that might serve to restrict development. They are SSSIs, Green Belt, AONB, Local Green Space, heritage assets and areas at risk of flooding. Whilst the application site contains St Rumbolds Well, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM), it is located on the edge of the site and does not restrict development but presents an opportunity to provide an improved setting for the SAM.
- 1.17 Neither Exception 1, nor Exception 2, applies to the application proposals. There is every reason that permission should be granted for the application proposals given the imperative set out in the NPPF in relation to sustainable development and meeting housing needs.
- 1.18 The submission of this outline application follows discussions and meetings with the Local Authority at various junctures, at which schemes have been presented, and updates on the emerging policy position received.

#### **Application Documentation**

- 1.19 Further explanation of the planning application proposals is set out in section 2 of this Planning Statement and within the application documentation that is submitted in support of the application. The planning application documentation comprises:
- Covering Letter
  - the requisite planning application fee
  - Planning Application Form;
  - Ownership Certificates
  - Application Drawings:

- Location Plan
- Illustrative Masterplan
- Design and Access Statement
- Planning Statement
- Transport Statement
- Travel Plan
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- Ecological Assessment
- Flood Risk Assessment

### **Site Location and Physical Context**

- 1.20 The site at Mitchelswood Farm extents to some 3.05 hectares in size and comprises areas of grazing land; a substantial sand-school; extensive stable buildings and associated storage, office, parking and hardstanding; private garaging; a large detached private dwelling; and associated private gardens and areas of landscape planting. The application site, as indicated by the red-lined area on the submitted Location Plan, comprises 2.72 hectares of land. The site is accessed via a driveway from Allington Road.
- 1.21 The site is bounded to the north by Allington Road, to the west and east by residential development fronting onto Allington Road, and to the south by a large covered sand school and storage building and paddocks. Beyond the covered sand school and paddocks is open countryside. The site is well contained to the west and east by existing tree and hedgerow planting and by the main built up area of Newick to the north of Allington Road.
- 1.22 Newick itself is located broadly mid-way between the towns of Uckfield and Haywards Heath, both of which offer a variety of services, retail, leisure, secondary education and employment. Whilst both Uckfield and Haywards Heath are located outside of Lewes District Council they are identified as district and secondary regional centres respectively, with an hourly bus service connecting them to Newick.
- 1.23 Newick has a number of key services and facilities that meet the day-to-day needs of its residents and the wider hinterland, the majority of these facilities are located within 400 to 1200 metres of the site. These include:
- Employment opportunities
  - Mid Downs medical practice
  - Local retails including a general store and village bakery
  - Post Office
  - Public Houses (The Bull, Royal Oak, Crown Inn)

- Newick Primary School
- Newick Pre-School nursery
- King George V playing fields
- Newick Village Hall
- Newick Community Centre
- St Mary's Church



## 2.0 THE PROPOSALS

### **Development Concept**

- 2.1 The development concept at Mitchelswood Farm is of a sensitively designed scheme which respect the site's landscape setting but strong relationship with the existing town framework and which connects effectively with the rest of Newick and delivers a number of wider benefits to the town and rural hinterland.
- 2.2 Further explanation of the development concept is provided in the accompanying Design and Access Statement.

### **Density of Development**

- 2.3 The application proposes a development comprising 63 dwellings at a density consistent within the context of Newick and edge location.

### **Transport & Movement**

- 2.4 The application proposes new access to each of the development areas, access will be obtained off the Allington Road.
- 2.5 The new residential area will include a network of safe streets that will be designed to promote the ease of movement for pedestrians and cyclists. This includes, pedestrian and cycle links to the Allington Road which provides a safe pedestrian route into the village centre.
- 2.6 A Transport Assessment (TA) has been produced and forms part of the application documentation. The TA sets out in further detail the transport issues and how these are addressed and demonstrates how the proposals are entirely consistent with the principles of sustainable development and with transport objectives. The TA demonstrates, based on extensive evidence and surveys, that the application proposals will not have a significant impact on the local road network.

### **Green Infrastructure & Public Open Space**

- 2.7 The proposed development will be set within an attractive landscape setting, with the establishment of a high quality public realm that is served by formal and informal open spaces.
- 2.8 The proposals include considerable areas of local open space, and each dwelling will benefit from its own areas of private or communal amenity space.

### **Benefits of the Proposals**

- 2.9 The proposed development offers a number of benefits, including for instance:
- provision of 63 new homes to meet housing needs;
  - provision of affordable housing to meet identified needs;
  - will deliver much needed housing for Newick and Lewes, assisting in meeting the worsening identified housing land supply shortfall;
  - embracing the existing mature hedgerows and trees, where appropriate, in order to create a high quality development and public realm;
  - enhance the public right of way across the site;
  - creates attractive areas of public open space that makes a positive contribution locally.
- 2.10 These benefits will be delivered on a site located in a sustainable location. The proposals therefore, accord with the NPPF core planning principles that planning should, “*proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs.*” The benefits of the proposals will contribute to ensuring that Newick is a thriving local place.

### 3.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 This section of the planning statement analyses the key policy documents at national and local levels to include the statutory Development Plan for Newick and Lewes District. It then identifies the key policy themes which are relevant to Lewes District Council's consideration of the application and explores their position in relation to the development proposals.

#### **The Statutory Development Plan**

- 3.2 The South East Plan was revoked on 25 March 2013, with the exception of two policies. Those policies of the South East Plan that have been retained remain part of the Development Plan but are not relevant to consideration of this appeal.
- 3.3 The statutory Development Plan for the purpose of the determination of this planning application comprises the saved policies within **Lewes District Local Plan (2003)**.
- 3.4 Saved policies of the Lewes District Local Plan ('the Plan'), adopted in 2003, remain part of the development plan for the District only insofar as they are up to date and relevant. The Plan covers the period until 2011.
- 3.5 The Secretary of State in 'saving' a number of the policies of the Local Plan by his direction, dated 25 September 2007, indicated that "*where policies were adopted some time ago, it is likely that material considerations, in particular the emergence of new national and regional policy and also new evidence, will be afforded considerable weight in decisions*".
- 3.6 Whilst out of date, the plan provides evidence in its approach to planning with the Plans 'general aims' promoting sustainable development and ensuring that there is an adequate supply of housing and housing land.
- 3.7 The Local Plan defines planning boundaries for each settlement. Mitchelswood Farm lies outside the settlement boundary of Newick

- 3.8 Policy CT1 states that planning permission will not generally be granted for development outside the settlement boundaries. The retention of the open character of the countryside is of heightened importance where it separates settlements and prevents their coalescence. Development exempt from this rule may, however, not be acceptable where its scale would significantly erode the gap between settlements and detract from their separate identities. There is existing residential development on both sides of Allington Road, including to the east of the site, and the developing of the site would not erode any gaps between settlements.

### **Emerging Development Plan Policy**

*Lewes District Council Local Plan, Part 1: Joint Core Strategy – Proposed Submission Document.*

- 3.9 Lewes District Council, in partnership with the South Downs National Park Authority (NPA) has prepared a plan covering the period up to 2030 – the Core Strategy Part 1.
- 3.10 The Core Strategy Part 1, has been through numerous rounds of consultation and is due to be submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination during the course of September 2014, and it is the Council's intention to formally adopt the document in early 2015.
- 3.11 The Core Strategy sets out a number of strategic objects, these objectives seek to deliver homes to meet the needs of the district; create and support sustainable communities; conserve and enhance natural beauty.
- 3.12 It is acknowledged that 56% of the district falls within the South Downs National Park, of which future housing provision must have regards to its statutory purposes. Newick, and the proposal site lies outside of the South Downs National Park.
- 3.13 Emerging Spatial Policy 1 '*Provision of housing and employment land*,' states that between the period 2010 and 2030, a minimum of 5,600 net additional dwellings are to be provided within the plan area (approximately 280 dwellings per annum). Based on this figure and taking into consideration existing commitments the District identifies that an additional 3,544 dwellings need to be accommodated.
- 3.14 Table 2 identifies Newick as a Local Service centre and it is appropriate to accommodate in excess of the 100 dwellings. This is supported by Spatial Policy 2 '*Distribution of housing*'.

3.15 Emerging Core Policy 1 '*Affordable housing*' sets a district wide target of 40%, including affordable rented and intermediate (shared ownership) housing on developments of 10 or more dwellings. Emerging Core Policy 2, requires sustainable, mixed and balanced communities to be delivered through a range of dwelling types and sizes to meet the identified local need, based on the best available evidence.

3.16 Emerging Core Policy 10 '*Natural environment and landscape character*,' seeks to conserve and enhance the district natural environment, including landscape assets, biodiversity, geodiversity, priority habitats and species, along with species and statutory and locally designed sites.

*Lewes District Council Local Plan, Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD*

3.17 Lewes District Council are in the process of preparing a Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD ('Part 2'). Local Plan Part 2 when adopted will allocated land for different types of development (including housing and employment), as well as land to be protected. This document will also reassess the 'saved' policies set out in the 2003 Lewes District Local Plan to establish if they're appropriate to take forward.

3.18 The District Council anticipate the proposed submission version will be published spring/summer 2015.

3.19 The November 2013 '*Issues and Options Topic Paper 2: Housing*,' sets out the options for delivering the planned housing as set out in the emerging Joint Core Strategy. Part 2 only considers areas that falls outside the South Downs National Park.

3.20 The application site was considered as part of the process (referred to as '43. Land at Mitchelswood Farm – NW/A11'). Following the site assessment it was concluded that the site is "*suitable, available and achievable*," with the notional start date being stated as 2016.

3.21 The District Council acknowledge the emerging Newick Neighbourhood Plan, and that the Plan is expected to address housing allocations. The site options set out by the District (including the proposal site) will be considered on the understanding that any sites brought forward as part of the District Council's Part 2 document are contingency sites should the Neighbourhood Plan not be progressed or adopted.

*Newick Parish Council Proposed Neighbourhood Plan: Independent Examination Version*

- 3.22 The Newick Neighbourhood Development Plan (the 'Neighbourhood Plan'), has been prepared by Newick Parish Council and covers the period until 2030. The Neighbourhood Plan has now been formally submitted to Lewes District Council.
- 3.23 The Plan responds to the District Councils emerging Core Strategy requirement to for Newick to accommodate a minimum of 100 dwellings over the plan period. However, the Plan is restrictive in terms of realising the sites, with SPA related EU designations restricting delivery on the proposed allocations.
- 3.24 Whilst it is acknowledged that the Neighbourhood Plan has been submitted it is believed limited weight should be accorded to the Plan until such time it has been tested at independent examination and has been 'made.'

**Other Relevant Documents**

**Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), November 2013**

- 3.25 The SHLAA has been undertaken to examine the potential for the District to accommodate new housing. The findings of this report are used to inform the emerging Local Plan, and has been used by Lewes in the preparation of the Local Plan Part 2 in particular, and Part 1 to assist in assessing housing land availability .
- 3.26 It is of course acknowledged that the assessment is not a statement of Council policy and does not in itself determine whether a site should be allocated for housing development. It only assesses whether sites that have been submitted to the Council are either deliverable or developable for future housing development.
- 3.27 The Mitchelswood Farm site has been identified within the SHLAA in two parcels (Refs 03NW and 16NW) as being 'suitable, available, achievable and deliverable' for residential development, with the combined application site suggested as being able to deliver 85 dwellings.

**Housing Land Supply Position Statement, April 2014**

- 3.28 The housing land supply position sets out the Districts housing land supply position. The calculations are based on the Districts recent housing need works, which identifies Lewes's district's objectively assessed need to be between 9,200 and 10,400 units between 2011/12 and 2030/31 (460 and 520 units per annum respectively). Until such time, when the target in the Joint Core Strategy can be used as the basis for establishing housing land supply calculations, a mid-range point of 9,800 units (4980 pa) has been used by the District for the purposes of establishing housing land supply.
- 3.29 Lewes District Council have identified that at present they have 1.80 year housing land supply (this calculation does not include a 5% buffer).
- 3.30 When tracked over recent housing land supply reports, which are generally published in six month intervals in Lewes, the housing land supply has got progressively worse over recent years, with a significantly worsened situation demonstrated within the most recent reports.
- 3.31 At the time of reporting on 1 October 2012, Lewes could identify a sufficient level of housing land, with a supply of 6.07 years. This had dropped at the next time of reporting, in April 2013, to 5.4 years, but still able to demonstrate a 5-year supply of land.
- 3.32 In August 2013 this was no longer the case, with 4.1 year's supply identified (with 5% buffer added). In October of the same year this became 3.9 years; 3.8 years in January 2014, leading to the most substantial drop of all to the current 1.8 years' supply. At a recent meeting with Officers it was clear that this was not going to be improved upon at the next time of reporting (anticipated October 2014).
- 3.33 This is clearly a chronic and worsening situation, and one that must be an overriding consideration when considering a scheme for residential development that would assist in meeting the shortfall, on an otherwise wholly appropriate site.
- 3.34 The Council acknowledges they are not able to sustainably deliver housing to meet their objectively assessed housing need:

*“the above [five year housing land supply calculation] represents the housing land supply position within the context of the objectively assessed need for housing within the district. Both the District Council and South Downs National Park Authority recognise that this level of need cannot be sustainably delivered within the district and are pursuing a housing delivery target that falls significantly short of this level of need. As soon as we are of the view that this housing target, as set out in the Joint Core Strategy, can be used on the basis for calculating our housing land supply, this position statement will be updated.”*

### **Habitats Regulation on Development in the North East of Lewes District**

- 3.35 A Habitat Regulations Assessment Background Paper was prepared to inform Lewes' emerging planning policy documents to consider how the Council should determine applications for residential development that may have an impact on the Ashdown Forest, which was designated both a Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC), in light of Inspector recommendations at Local Plan Inquiries in neighbouring Boroughs.
- 3.36 Given the presence of the Ashdown Forest, a 7km 'zone of influence' has been drawn up around the Ashdown Forest. Any development that falls within this exclusion zone must contribute to Suitable Natural Alternative Greenspace (SANG) to alleviate any pressures on recreation use of the Forest. At present, Lewes District Council have not identified any SANGs meaning that there is current presumption against new residential development within the 7km exclusion zone.
- 3.37 The north eastern corner of the proposal site result in a very small incursion into the 7km exclusion site. However, no development is proposed on this part of the site, with this area contributing to the open space within the development.
- 3.38 This has been confirmed by Natural England as being an appropriate land use, and that they will have no objection given that no residential development is proposed within the zone of influence. Details are provided within the relevant sections of the Ecological Assessment, submitted with this application.



- 3.39 This means that the residential development proposed is wholly acceptable in respect of its relationship to the Ashdown Forest SPA and, indeed, that this is a preferable location for development in Newick in this regard, given that the majority of the village (and all proposed Neighbourhood Plan sites) are within the zone of influence and therefore, at this time, unable to deliver residential development given the inability to appropriately mitigate against this.

#### **National Planning Policy Framework**

- 3.40 The NPPF was published in March 2012. An overarching objective of the NPPF is to remove barriers to sustainable growth and significantly increase the delivery of new homes. This proposal will provide up to 450 new homes. Sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities are to be encouraged. The application proposals will make an important contribution to mixed and inclusive communities through the provision of a diverse mix of homes (including affordable homes) that people want and need.

#### *Decision making*

- 3.41 Paragraph 14, states that at the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-making this means:
- approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and
  - where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.
- 3.42 Insofar as the first clause is concerned, the development plan is considered out-of-date.
- 3.43 In relation to the second clause, the site is not subject to any restrictive designations. Whilst St Rumbolds Well is located just inside the boundary of the application site, the application proposals present significant positive benefits in terms of enhancement of the setting and increased public access.
- 3.44 Therefore planning permission should be granted unless there are any adverse impacts that significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The materials submitted in support of the application demonstrate that the application does not give rise to any adverse impacts likely to outweigh the benefits of the proposals (for instance as described in section 2 above) let alone the significantly and demonstrably outweigh the proposals.

*Housing Need*

3.45 Paragraph 159 of the NPPF makes clear that local planning authorities should have a clear understanding of housing needs in their area. They should:

- *“prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess their full housing needs, identifying the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures that the local population is likely to need over the plan period to ensure it meets household and population projections, taking account of migration and demographic change;*
- *“address the need for all types of housing, including affordable housing and the needs of different groups in the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and people wishing to build their own homes); and*
- *“cater for housing demand and the scale of housing supply necessary to meet this demand.”*

3.46 The District Council in their latest Housing Land Supply Position Statement (April 2014), have acknowledged that they are failing to meet the Districts objectively assessed housing needs. Currently, Lewes District Council has 1.8 years housing land supply (without taking into consideration a 5% buffer).

*Good design*

3.47 The NPPF promotes good design which establishes a strong sense of place which responds to local character and history, incorporating local materials. The proposal will meet this requirement as set out in the Design and Access Statement. This includes by reflecting the existing site context and features, through the provision of public access.

*Promoting healthy communities*

3.48 The NPPF seeks to promote the health and well being of the community through providing open space and recreation facilities. The proposal will meet this requirement by creating open space to accommodate further informal space provision.

3.49 The development is located within a sustainable location, Newick has been identified as a rural service centre, with a number of local facilities which are within walking distance of the proposed development. In addition, the site is in close proximity of a bus stop which provides an hourly service to Haywards Heath and Uckfield which reduces the need to travel by car.

**National Planning Practice Guidance**

3.50 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was launched in March 2014 and is a web-based resource which is considered a ‘live’ document and updated or amended when

required. The on line resource which is intended to amplify and reinforce the policies of the NPPF. The NPPG reinforces the importance of having a plentiful supply of housing land.

- 3.51 The NPPG provides additional guidance on design emphasising the part good design plays in sustainable development. The full details of design can be found in the accompanying Design and Access Statement.

### **Summary**

- 3.52 The NPPF is the key policy framework for the consideration of this application.
- 3.53 Nationally there is a significant commitment to housing delivery. Newick is a rural service centre and has a significant role to play in delivering growth and accommodating considerable housing numbers to the rural part of the district.
- 3.54 There is a chronic shortfall of housing land supply in Lewes (1.8 years versus a 5-year requirement), with not enough land to meet identified housing need. The delivery of this site would clearly assist in this.
- 3.55 Whilst the Local Plan Part 2 is yet to be published in draft, its early works demonstrates the suitability, deliverability of its site, and its ability to contribute to the District's 5 year housing land supply, through the positive analysis within the SHLAA, leading to a proposed allocation in the event that the Neighbourhood Plan does not progress within a reasonable time period.
- 3.56 The site has been recognised by Officers as being an appropriate location for development, and would represent a sustainable development. The housing supply situation in Lewes is an overriding consideration, and given the good development credentials of the site and the appropriateness of the scheme presented, should be a positive determining factor in the consideration of this application.

#### **4.0 PLANNING EVALUATION**

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework provides a clear basis for the decision taking framework, setting out in paragraph 14 the approach to the determination of planning applications.
- 4.2 In the context of the development plan for Lewes District Council, the Local Plan as not been significantly progressed and the adopted Local Plan is deemed 'out-of-date'. Therefore, limited weight can be given to the saved policies. In the absence of an up-to-date development this application is to be determined on the basis of paragraph 14 of the Framework. The emerging Neighbourhood Plan is yet to be tested by an independent examiner and be 'made' yet provides evidence as to the suitability of the application proposals.
- 4.3 The approach for the determination of this application is therefore, in the context of an absent development plan policy (as is evident here) then permission should be granted unless there are adverse impacts that demonstrably and significantly outweigh the benefits of development.
- 4.4 The NPPF seeks to obtain investment in new homes, particularly providing for the much needed demand for affordable housing, evidenced to be substantial across the district. There is an urgent commitment to the delivery of the homes and jobs that communities require. The NPPF and recent Ministerial Statements promote the accelerated delivery of new homes. A proactive approach to development is now a must and this should provide the backdrop against which this planning application is assessed.
- 4.5 The proposals present significant benefits for Newick through the provision of new housing, including affordable housing provision, designed to respond to the local context. This will both meet housing need, and support job growth, and help contribute to local services.
- 4.6 The accompanying technical evidence does not give rise to any adverse impact which cannot be mitigated, and the advice within the various specialise reports has been taken in to account in the evolution of the scheme, in some cases leading to amendments to the layout through the design process. This includes a detailed analysis of highway safety and capacity, demonstrating the scheme is acceptable in this regard.
- 4.7 The development of the site would not increase flood risk at the site or elsewhere; and the ecological surveying and assessment demonstrates that, subject to recommendations, the development is wholly acceptable.

4.8 The arboricultural analysis is clear in concluding that the current illustrative proposals are appropriate, with an acceptable amount of tree removal given the relevant type and quality of trees and additional planting / landscaping (including to the southern boundary of the site). Detailed submissions in due course would of course have to be accompanied by their own arboricultural analysis to demonstrate acceptability in this regard, including taking account of future pressures on retained trees.

4.9 The Council have a significant and worsening housing land supply, being able to identify only 1.8 years' worth of land. In such circumstances general local housing policies within the Development Plan are given less weight than the housing need and, as such, the housing land supply situation should be the principal determining factor and the starting point in the consideration of this application.

**Meeting the requirements of sustainable development**

4.10 The National Planning Policy Framework considers there to be three key strands to sustainable development – an economic role, a social role and an environmental role.

4.11 Considered in light of these three elements of sustainable development the proposals will help stimulate economic development through the investment in house building and the wider construction industry in the area and support the existing opportunities and services. They will support the town centre.

4.12 With regard to the social aspects of the definition of sustainable development, the proposals will add positively to the delivery of new homes.

4.13 Nationally, but also in Lewes District, as the District has identified it is not able to meet its objectively assessed housing needs. Upon reviewed, of a number of the Districts Housing Land Supply updates, it is apparent that the Districts ability to meet this need is forever decreasing. This has had a significant detrimental impact on people's access to a decent home, and of increasing concern has fundamentally exacerbated the shortage of affordable housing across the country and in the District. Clearly there is a sense of urgency in the need to deliver new housing and make up for recent shortfalls in housing provision.

4.14 The proposals site it is a readily available opportunity, controlled by the applicant, who is able to deliver development in an expedient manner with no significant site constraints that would preclude the development as proposed.

- 4.15 The proposals will contribute to the range of sites needed to deliver the housing requirements of the District and as required by the NPPF to promote competition.
- 4.16 The applicant is committed to deliver up to a policy compliant level of affordable housing as part of a viable development, the precise scale and nature of which will be determined in discussion with Lewes District Council. They will seek to work closely with the local registered provider to ensure the right mix and tenure of housing is provided to meet local needs. The proposed development will deliver a sustainable, mixed, balanced community on the proposal site.
- 4.17 In environmental terms careful consideration of the impact of the proposals has been undertaken in developing the application proposals, and these have been addressed in the series of reports that accompany the application.
- 4.18 Great consideration has been given to the Ashdown Forrest (a designated SPA and SAC) and the 7km zone of influence. Whilst the north eastern tip of the site is included within the one, the proposed development excludes this part of the site from built development. An approach which has been confirmed as acceptable by Natural England in pre-application discussions (as demonstrated in the Ecological Assessment) and one which ensures this is a preferred location for development at this time compared to any other site in Newick given the unavailability of appropriate mitigation measures.
- 4.19 The proposal site is one of few around Newick primarily excluded from this zone. All the sites identified in the Neighbourhood Plan fall within the exclusion zone. Given that Lewes District Council are yet to identify any SANGs and there is no indication when this will happen, the deliverability of the sites set out in the Neighbourhood Plan is questionable, as a result of the presumption against new residential development in the zone of influence whilst there is an absence of SANGs.
- 4.20 The reports submitted in support of the application demonstrate that the application does not give rise to any adverse impacts likely to outweigh the benefits of the proposals let alone significantly and demonstrably outweigh the proposals.
- 4.21 The proposed development has been designed to a high standard as is described in the accompanying Design and Access Statement.

- 4.22 Overall, the scheme is considered to address all aspects of sustainable development and will deliver a high quality sustainable development. The ability to bring forward the site in a timely manner, when housing is needed most, as a local and national scale, fully accords with the Government's presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 4.23 The site is particularly well related in terms of the town centre and capable of promoting sustainable modes of travel, thus reducing the impact of the development on the local highway infrastructure.
- 4.24 In summary the proposed development offers the potential for significant benefits as set out below:
- provision of 63 new homes to meet housing needs;
  - provision of affordable housing to meet identified needs;
  - embracing the existing mature hedgerows and trees, where appropriate, in order to create a high quality development and public realm;
  - creates a public open space that makes a positive contribution locally;
  - enhanced public right of way across the site.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 The proposals will deliver new homes, including affordable tenures, in an area of need. The homes will support local facilities and services, and will contribute to achieving economic growth.
- 5.2 Given that this application is being considered under the context of the NPPF given the chronic housing land supply issues in Lewes – the Council only able to demonstrate 1.8 years' of supply – the benefits of the proposals in terms of delivering housing (including affordable housing) and wider community benefits are compelling reasons demonstrating the consistency of the proposals with the NPPF.
- 5.3 The proposals are sustainably located, with bus stops in immediate proximity of the site and with footpaths ensuring easy, walking distance links to the village centre and existing facilities.
- 5.4 The site has been favourably considered in the preparation of emerging Lewes policy, having been confirmed as acceptable for development through the SHLAA, leading to a proposed allocation within the Local Plan Part 2 Site Allocations document should the Neighbourhood Plan not progress in a reasonable time period.
- 5.5 The development would not have any detrimental effect on the Ashdown Forest SPA, given that there is no built form proposed within the 7km zone of influence, and confirmation from Natural England that they would therefore not object to the proposals (as articulated in the Ecological Assessment).
- 5.6 The supporting documentation submitted with this application demonstrates that the scheme is wholly appropriate when considered against all technical requirements, including highway safety and capacity, trees and landscaping, ecology, and flood risk.
- 5.7 It is therefore considered that, in the important context of the lack of a sufficient housing land supply in Lewes, the planning case for the proposed outline application for 63 dwellings is compelling, and outline permission should be granted accordingly under the policy and objectives of the NPPF.



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