

MEETING TITLE

Landscape Character and Visual Impact
Assessment Meeting with, Kent Downs AONB Unit
& Folkestone & Hythe District Council

DATE

31st July 2018

TIME

9.30am

LOCATION

Kent Down AONB Unit offices, Penstock Hall Farm
Canterbury Road, Brabourne TN25 5LL

PARTICIPANTS

Katie Miller, Planning Manager, Kent Downs AONB Unit (KM)
Piran Cooper, Landscape & Urban Design Officer Shepway DC (PC)
Andy Jarret, Head of Strategic Development Projects, FHDC (AJ)
James Farrer, Project Officer Planning Department, FHDC (JF)
Ben Hilder, Associate Technical Director-Landscape, Arcadis (BH)

COPIES TO

Julia Coneybeer, Lead Advisor, Sustainable Development Team,
Natural England (JC),
Rachel Bishop, Adviser, Sustainable Development Team, Natural
England (RB),
Aydin Zorlutuna, Technical Director-Landscape, Arcadis
Julia Wallace, Otterpool Park Project Manager - Masterplanning
and Design, FHDC
Rebecca Kearney, Otterpool Park Project Manager, Arcadis
Tom Vernon, Otterpool Park Planning Consultant, Quod

NOTE

ACTION: WHO

WHEN

1.0 Introductions

2.0 Scheme Design Update

- 2.1 BH and AJ reaffirmed that, as per the Framework Masterplan document and recent consultation, the scheme being considered is now 8,500 residential units, with a further 1,500 units contributing to the overall Framework Masterplan of 10,000 homes. Outline planning permission would be sought for the 8,500 unit scheme.
- 2.2 JF confirmed that the stakeholder consultation period upon the planning application (that they would expect the AONB Unit to respond within) would be longer than the standard period given the scale of the development and the size of the application.
- Further Development Land Identified within the Framework Masterplan*
- 2.3 AJ confirmed that the land between Link Park and Lypne had been purchased by Homes England, and they are now in discussion with the Parish Council to ensure how the 'gap' separating the village and any potential development can be protected from further development in the future.
- 2.4 JF confirmed that the Regulation 18 and 19 aspects relating to this land and its previous allocation will be suitably amended/removed before the upcoming local plan examination

Post Meeting note 08/08/2018: PC clarified that the allocation of this site in the Places and Policies Local Plan (PPLP) reflects the discussions FHDC had with the previous landowners/ applicant (Homes England did not purchase the land until after the PPLP consultation).

As the submission Draft of the PPLP has been through Reg 19 consultation the next stage in the plan making process is the Examination in Public. It is not possible to amend or remove the existing allocation without undertaking further consultation, which FHDC is not planning to do.

It is most likely that the change will be picked up through the 'Main Modification' consultation, during the Examination in Public.

- 2.5 KM sought clarification on where the car park for the Port Lympne Animal Park would be relocated to if the Framework Masterplan proposals were built, as in their current position its causes glare and reflection when seen from the North Downs. AJ agreed to clarify this

AJ

Proposed Height of Buildings within the Masterplan

- 2.6 KM reiterated her concerns regarding the 14-18m potential height of proposed buildings within the current masterplan, on account of them having little association with the height of buildings within the local area.
- 2.7 AJ highlighted that this variety in building height was necessary to help create the sense of place when making a new town, otherwise the settlement can appear a 'sprawl'.
- 2.8 JF confirmed that the LPA were also content to see such a hierarchy of building height through the development, in order to create a recognisable town centre, local sub-centres and other areas of destination for an emerging community.
- 2.9 PC suggested that the organically developed layout and form of other settlements (good and bad) within this area of the Vale of Holmesdale could help guide the pattern of built form, settlement structure, open space, and vegetative structure within Otterpool. Whilst the previous examples cited within the planning of Otterpool (such as Tenterden) had been useful, more local settlements such as those of Charing, Brabourne, Wye, Lenham and even Ashford would show how such places can be accommodated (or in the case of Ashford, not so well accommodated) when seen in views from the North Downs.
- 2.10 BH agreed to use these, and confirmed that that other towns of more equivalent size, also in the lee of the Downs (such as, Sevenoaks, Oxted, Reigate, Dorking etc), were also being used in this process. All agreed that these should be considered too.
- 2.11 AJ pointed out that it was also important that the scheme displayed a contemporary feel alongside this respect for local settlement pattern. All agreed.

BH

Visualisations

- 2.12 BH presented the preliminary 3-dimensional visualisations of the scheme from the selected viewpoints along the North Downs Way, and outlined how these are being used to help shape the masterplan.

- 2.13 KM was content that these were the locations from which to undertake this work but requested these to be shown: at a larger size; with key areas enlarged; with expected roof colours, and as a 'before and after' following the introduction of mitigating structural planting. KM also requested a copy of the ZTV of the current proposal.
- 2.14 JF inquired whether or not the impact upon the *kinetic* visual experience, when walking upon the North Downs Way, would be taken into account within the LVIA. BH confirmed that it would be covered in the LVIA, as part of the section describing the impact upon the North Downs Way.
- 2.15 BH inquired from KM whether she felt that the North Downs National Trail Officer needed to be specifically consulted as suggested in the Scoping Opinion received from Kent County Council (KCC). KM confirmed that she felt that it was not necessary, as her comments had covered this aspect already.
- 2.16 JF requested that long sections through the site and cross sections through the more sensitive site boundaries be prepared and presented, in order to display scheme proposals.

BH

Phasing

- 2.17 AJ outlined that the thinking behind the planned early phasing of the scheme's build-out was based around establishing the town centre, using client owned land, and ensuring that there was a suitable spread of new dwellings to fund the implementation of infrastructure.
- 2.18 BH outlined the principles of Advance Planting that were being planned at the moment.

Ensuring Design Quality

- 2.19 JF confirmed that mechanisms to ensure that the design agreements made at this outline design stage of the project were carried through to the detailed design and reserved matters stages of the project were being discussed at the moment, and that there was likely to be a document that bridges between the two.

3.0 Update on Green Infrastructure Proposals

- 3.1 BH outlined some of the emerging proposals for key open space, Green Infrastructure (GI) and boundaries of the scheme. This included the East Stour River open space, the Woodland Country Park around the Otterpool Quarry SSSI, and the A20 boundary with the AONB / Sandling Park.
- 3.2 Whilst KM expressed concerns regarding the placement of a dual carriageway so close to the AONB she confirmed that the proposed arrangement of placing the proposed dual carriageway inside of the site boundary and creating a 20m buffer between this and the edge of the AONB/Sandling Park was preferable.
- 3.3 KM expressed an interest in being involved with the ongoing design of this aspect of the scheme, and in particular what could be done to ameliorate the current adverse character of the roundabout immediately south of the railway line, mitigate the views of planned commercial units around Hill House Farm (i.e. with green roofs for example), and deal successfully with

the potential cuttings and embankments along the dual carriageway.

- 3.4 AJ recognised that this area was a particular design conundrum, and that it required more design input. AJ would speak to the landowner of Sandling Park to see if there was any possibility of in-kind amelioration planting upon their land around the roundabout to help integrate this better. **AJ**
- 3.5 BH presented the proposals for increasing the quantity of footpath, bridleways and cycle accessibility, joining up with surrounding Public Rights of Way, and establish a Heritage Trail through the site to celebrate the rich diversity of history present there.
- 3.6 BH outlined that the long-term stewardship of the green spaces, and community facilities across the scheme were actively being considered by the client team, and that there would be more to report on this later in the summer/autumn. **BH**

4.0 Environmental Statement & LVIA Update

Representative Viewpoints

- 4.1 As per the Scoping opinion KM confirmed that a further viewpoint (grid ref 610500 142400) upon the North Downs Way between Brabourne Downs and the Canterbury Road be included, to those already agreed – but highlighted that it could replace one of the existing agreed viewpoints i.e. Farthing Common.
- 4.2 BH has recorded the view from this location, so will consider its inclusion and whether or not it replaces one of the existing agreed viewpoints. **BH**
- 4.3 JF and PC requested that a viewpoint from the position where the Saxon Shore Way meets the Aldington Road, near the southern extent of the Framework Masterplan boundary would also be helpful – even if it showed that there was no view.
- 4.4 BH agreed to show this within the LVIA as part of an explanation of those sensitive areas in the site's surrounds whose visual amenity has been scoped out due to there not being a view to the development. **BH**

Night-time Assessment

- 4.5 BH outlined that the night-time assessment had included the collection of photographs from those locations within the AONB along the North Downs, at Aldington and at Newingreen. KM and PC confirmed that this was sufficient.

Ash Die Back

- 4.6 KM outlined her concern that the amount of Ash die-back that is expected in forthcoming years should be considered when assessing the visual impact of the scheme. KM believes that there may be up to 95% die-back in Ash locally, and that these currently make up 20% of trees within woodlands in this area. KM to share the evidence she has on this with BH. **KM**

Impact upon Recreational Amenity within the AONB

- 4.7 KM requested sight of the results and the initial interpretation from the recreational use survey undertaken as part of the HRA data collection work that Arcadis carried out at Etchinghill and

Post meeting note:
06-08-2018: Alison Powell contacted KM, and agreed to share this information. KM agreed to provide AP with overview of where issues are occurring.

Wye Downs last summer. With this she can then provide Arcadis with her thoughts on whether or not she feels this is sufficient in terms a baseline for assessing the recreational impact upon the AONB. BH stated that it was his colleague's plan to utilise this and extrapolate it to other parts of the AONB, within the recreational assessment part of the ES.

- 4.8 KM agreed to provide Arcadis with a list of key areas within the AONB that she (and the KCC PRoW officer, and North Downs National Trail Officer) feels are a concern from a recreational impact perspective, and what potential improvements to these may be necessary.

Impact on Rural Lanes within the AONB

- 4.9 KM confirmed, as set out in her response to the Scoping Report, that she would like to know more about the impact upon the rural lanes through the AONB as a result of greater traffic. BH will contact his colleagues addressing this matter and ask them to provide details of the modelling carried out, their initial interpretation of these, and how they are directly addressing this topic.

BH – post meeting note:
01-08-2018: BH asked Janice Hughes and Phil Longman to contact KM with this information.

- 4.10 KM agreed to supply Arcadis with a list of those rural lanes within or around the AONB that she feels are particularly susceptible to change brought about by the development.

AONB Publications.

- 4.11 KM confirmed that the AONB Unit's update to their Landscape Character Assessment is incomplete and is not expected to be published until next year, in line with the forthcoming AONB Management Plan (which itself is only at the 1st draft stage). As such KM confirmed that it should not form the baseline to the LVIA work for Otterpool Park.
- 4.12 KM highlighted that the 'Setting of the Kent Downs AONB – Position Statement' has been fully adopted by the AONB Joint Advisory Committee, and is with each relevant local Planning Authority to adopt or not.
- 4.13 KM also highlighted that the 'Kent Downs AONB Rural Lanes Handbook' has been adopted by KCC and should be used to help shape, and referred to in the Otterpool Park masterplan.
- 4.14 KM highlighted that the AONB Unit are still keen to develop a 'colour study' (similar to those recently carried out by the High Weald AONB and the Malvern Hills AONB) and 'design guide' for the Kent Downs.
- 4.15 In addition, they consider that a separate 'colour study' commissioned by the Otterpool Park promoters, would benefit the integration of the scheme into its setting.
- 4.16 AJ agreed to consider commissioning this and potentially assisting with the funding of a study for the Kent Downs as a whole.

KM :please could this information be sent to Janice.Hughes@arcadis.com, and Phillip.Longman@arcadis.com

AJ

5.0 Future Engagement

- 5.1 The next update on progress upon the project was agreed to be in the 1st week of October. BH to circulate some suggested dates.

BH

- 5.2 BH also agreed to involve KM and PC in discussion upon the outline design of key areas of the schemes boundary, such as the dualling of the A20 along the site's eastern edge.
- 5.3 PC confirmed that he would like to be involved in future discussions with NE regarding the GI and public open space proposals within the site. KM would like to be kept aware of the main points arising from these discussions but does not feel that she needs to take part.

BH