



APPEAL BY HARTMIRES INVESTMENTS Ltd.

Land North of Turners Hill Road, Turners Hill, West Sussex

SUMMARY PROOF OF EVIDENCE

MARK GIBBINS, BA (HONS) MLI

**PLANNING INSPECTORATE REFERENCE:
APP/D3830/W/21/3266563**

**LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY REFERENCES:
DM/20/2877 AND AP/21/0009**

APPEAL INQUIRY: MAY 2021

CD7.2a

WYNDHAM HOUSE, 65 THE CLOSE, SALISBURY, WILTSHIRE, SP1 2EN
TEL: 01722 340140 E-MAIL: design@indigolandscap.co.uk WEB: www.indigolandscap.co.uk

INDIGO LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS LIMITED

REGISTERED OFFICE: 35 CHEQUERS COURT, BROWN STREET, SALISBURY, WILTSHIRE, SP1 2AS. REGISTERED IN ENGLAND COMPANY No. 3958191

I SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Scope of Evidence

- I.1 My evidence deals with the visual and landscape issues in relation to the Appeal Site proposals.
- I.2 It confirms that the ‘worst case’ scenario has been considered throughout, and then deals with visual issues, issues of landscape character, and cumulative effects.

Key issues

Visual issues

- I.3 The visual issues focus on the extent of visibility of the Appeal Site proposals; the effects on users of Footpath 68W and users of Turners Hill Road; the effects on the visual qualities of and views to and from the adjacent AONB and its setting; and conclude by comparing the effects of the ‘fallback’ with the proposals. Key points drawn out are as follows:
 - I.3.1 The Zone of Visual Influence of the proposals is very small, even in winter. Summer views are restricted to an area entirely outside the AONB and where only a short length of Turners Hill Road and Footpath 68W have the potential for views of the proposals.
 - I.3.2 From Footpath 68W, any ‘long views’ looking north that could be considered to be distinctive would be preserved by the scheme. Given the nature of the scheme proposals (and mitigation planting), effects would be restricted to the short term (and in any event in the long term would be little different to those associated with the ‘fallback’ consents).
 - I.3.3 From Turners Hill Road views are limited to people in vehicles passing the site entrance at some speed. Furthermore, the proposed Crematorium building is height restricted, set back and at a lower level than the road. Car parking would be largely hidden behind the roadside hedgerow. Even in the short term effects would be minimal, and in the medium and longer term any glimpses of the proposals would be largely screened by the proposed planting.
 - I.3.4 The effects on the visual qualities of the AONB and on receptors within the AONB would be so small that I consider them to be negligible.
 - I.3.5 There would be almost no effect on peoples’ experience of the AONB from within the area that comprises its ‘setting’; there would be very little intervisibility between the AONB and the proposals; and no long or important views would be affected (as referenced in Natural Environment paragraph 042 of the NPPG). Furthermore the Appeal Site proposals have been ‘sensitively handled’ and comply with the last sentence of Paragraph 042 by taking advantage of the natural features of the Site, and by proposing extensive mitigation planting that both reflects the natural burial approval and the surrounding wooded landscape character.

The 'fallback'

- I.3.6 When compared to the 'fallback' the Appeal Site proposals would have similar short term effects on visual receptors using Footpath 68W, but in the medium term the effects of the Crematorium would be less significant. In the long term the effects would be the same.
- I.3.7 From Turners Hill Road the 'fallback' Chapel would be more visible in the short term as it is taller and located closer to the road (although the overall effects of the two proposals would be similar and neither would be significant); and in the medium to long term the Appeal proposals would provide more effective screening.
- I.3.8 From the High Weald AONB the Appeal Site proposals would be almost entirely screened (effects would be negligible in all periods), but the 'fallback' Chapel would be clearly seen (at least in the short to medium term in winter).

Landscape character issues (including 'fallback')

- I.3.9 Landscape value and sensitivity are considered to be high, and the landscape character of the Site itself will clearly change.
- I.3.10 It is acknowledged that the effects of the Crematorium proposals on the character of the Site itself would be greater than the 'fallback', however, the 'fallback' Chapel is a taller building which would be more visible from Turners Hill Road and the AONB to the south. In terms of the scale of buildings seen from the landscape to the south, the 'fallback' will be more harmful to landscape character, at least in the short term.
- I.3.11 Whilst the character of the Appeal Site would change over time from one of open fields to woodland, given that woodland is characteristic of this landscape it would not be out of place. This is supported by both the Mid Sussex Landscape Character Assessment and by Mid Sussex District Plan Policy DP37. The 'fallback' approvals mean that the Site will become almost entirely wooded over time in any event.
- I.3.12 In terms of scale, a condition limiting the size of the Crematorium building to 600m² has been suggested. This is of a similar scale to buildings found within the surrounding landscape (including within the AONB). Furthermore, the building parameters have been deliberately restricted to a maximum AOD limit and (given the limited extent of the ZVI), the scale of the proposal would have very little impact on the surrounding countryside.
- I.3.13 Turning to tranquillity there are existing detractors (both aural and visual) within the landscape. There would be a small reduction in localised aural tranquillity experienced from Footpath 68W (slightly greater than that associated with the 'fallback') although any effect would fall away rapidly from the Site boundaries; however, there would be no (or de-minimis) effects on aural tranquillity levels experienced by people in vehicles along Turners Hill Road; and I do not believe that there would be any perception of increased noise (with its consequential effect on tranquillity) as experienced by people using the Public Footpaths in the wider landscape (including those within the AONB to the south). In terms of visual tranquillity, there would be some effects on the Site itself, but from

viewpoints in the immediate locality effects would be minimal; and effects associated with the Appeal proposals would be mitigated more quickly than those of the 'fallback'. In this sense the 'fallback' will be more harmful to landscape character, at least in the short term.

- 1.3.14 The effects on sense of place would be similar to those on tranquillity, and would not be affected to any meaningful degree by the proposed development. The 'long views' to the north from Footpath 68W would be retained, and it is my opinion that the sense of place associated with this being an undulating rural landscape with a strong wooded character would not be affected by the proposals to any significant degree (and in any event in the long term would be no different to the 'fallback'). Indeed, the effects on sense of place experienced whilst travelling south into the AONB or along Turners Hill Road are likely to be greater for the 'fallback' (in the short term at least) as the Chapel would be more visible from these locations.
- 1.3.15 Overall it is my judgement, that there would be no (or at worst negligible) effects on the landscape character of the High Weald AONB; and that these would certainly be no worse than the 'fallback'. The Appeal Site proposals would have no direct effects on the AONB, there is little potential for visibility from the AONB, and I do not believe any noise generated on Site or as a consequence of increased traffic would have a material effect on the tranquillity experienced along this very small part of the AONB's northern edge.
- 1.3.16 Finally, both proposals would have similar (limited) effects on long views to the north from the Site access point and from Footpath 68W, and both would provide access to a site where the opportunity for long views would be facilitated within the design.

Alleged policy contravention

- 1.4 The final section of my evidence deals briefly with the alleged contraventions of those policies identified within the reason for refusal (in so far as they are relevant to my area of expertise).
- 1.5 I clarify that the Site lies outside the AONB and that the High Weald Management Plan has no direct application; and I set out that given that this is an Outline Planning Application (and that the Council has control over detailed aspects of the design at the Reserved Matters stage), I can see no conflict with the policies in the Mid Sussex Design Guide.
- 1.6 The same applies to Paragraphs 124, 127 and 130 of the NPPF which are all design related (falling under Section 12 'Achieving well-designed places'), and to Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (which deals with 'character and design').
- 1.7 I consider paragraphs 8c, 170a and 170b of the NPPF where I find no conflict. It is Common Ground that the Site is not within a 'valued landscape' in terms of paragraph 170a, and in my judgement the Appeal proposals recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside in terms of paragraph 170b (and do so manifestly when the essentially comparable visual / landscape effects of the 'fallback' are included in the assessment).

- I.8 I then consider Policy DPI6 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 ‘High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’. I confirm that the proposals would not ‘*detract from the visual qualities or essential characteristics of the AONB*’ and would not ‘*adversely affect the views into and out of the AONB by virtue of its location or design*’. Again, I find no conflict with this policy.
- I.9 Finally I consider Policy DPI2 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 and confirm that whilst it is my judgement that limited, short term and localised harm would result from the proposed development, taking account of all relevant landscape and visual matters, the high quality of the proposals and the ‘fallback’ position, it is my professional opinion that there is no conflict with the Policy.

Conclusion

- I.10 In conclusion my opinion is that the proposed Crematorium development would cause only limited, localised, and relatively short term harm to the landscape character and visual amenity of the area, and given these findings, and the fact that the effects of the “fallback” approval would be no better overall than those associated with the current proposals, I invite the Inspector to allow the Appeal.