

<b>WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL CONSULTATION</b>	
<b>TO:</b>	Mid Sussex District Council
<b>FROM:</b>	WSCC Education – School Organisation
<b>DATE:</b>	19 June 2025
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Land East of Ansty Way Cuckfield Bypass Cuckfield West Sussex
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	DM/23/2866 Outline planning application (All matters reserved except for access) for the redevelopment of land to the east of Ansty to create a new Garden Community, comprising of the erection of up to 1,450 homes (including 30% affordable housing), up to 90 residential care units (C2 class), a primary school, a SEND school, health hub, sports facilities including all weather hockey pitches and tennis centre, allotments, retail, community and employment uses together with ancillary and associated development including new and enhanced pedestrian/cycle routes, open spaces, and landscaping. (Additional information and amended plans received 27th May 2025).
<b>CASE OFFICER:</b>	Steve Ashdown
<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>	WSCC Education’s formal recommendation is as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <del>No Objection</del></li> <li>b) <del>Conditional approval</del></li> <li>c) <del>Deferral</del></li> <li><b>d) Refusal</b></li> </ul>

Thank you for consulting WSCC in its capacity as Local Education Authority in respect of the above application. We have reviewed the information as submitted on 6 November 2023 and updated on 27 May 2025 and set out our recommendation and comments below.

## **1. Recommendation**

WSCC Education’s formal recommendation to the local planning authority is to refuse this decision for outline planning permission. WSCC Education and Property Teams, are not yet in a position to support this application as set out in the comments/areas of concern below.

### **2.1 Development Design Guide - wildlife corridor, character area of the schools and materiality**

2.1.1 Creation of a wildlife corridor between the SEND school site and the adjacent landscape (Page 28)

Pg28 sets a constraint on the SEND school: “the SEND school, with its associated landscape, must act as part of a transition area, setting back development from the AONB and creating a wildlife corridor between the site and the adjacent landscape”

Constraints on the full use of the school sites should be limited. School sites are secured by weldmesh fencing and will not provide a corridor for ground-based wildlife.

### 2.1.2 Character area for the schools – hedgerows, noise buffers and the entrance and drop-off and pick up area

Pg42/43 defines the character area for the schools. It sets out that hedgerows and trees must be retained, but also illustrates that the boundary (not consistent in other documents) is located adjacent to the road, meaning the existing hedgerow is within the school site. This constitutes a constraint on the use of the site and renders the land between hedge and road unusable for education purposes due to the lack of natural supervision, level difference and narrow strip. It should be noted that this affects the proposed SEND school. Unusable areas should be omitted from the Educational Land calculation.

Similarly, the Guide sets out a wide buffer zone within the school site to mitigate noise pollution and the interface with the AONB. This too should be discounted from the Educational Land calculation. The developer may wish to explore using the buffer zone as a linear park and/or active travel route instead.

The illustration suggests that school drop-off is to be located within the school site. The developer must plan for the mainstream school drop-off and pick-up within the wider masterplan and not to be located within the school site. The indicative layout on page 43 suggests a single main entrance and car park for both schools. The developer should include independent access and infrastructure connections to both schools, as they will be operationally independent from each other.

### 2.1.3 School materiality -cladding and location of the school on the site

At Pg 118, the Guide suggests red brick or black timber cladding could be used. Please note that we do not support timber cladding to schools due to increased risk of damage, fire and higher maintenance costs.

The guide sets out that the building “must” be set out in the North-West corner of the site. This may not be the optimal location due to the site constraints and operational needs of the two schools. The developer should attempt to keep master-planning options open at this stage. Reference again to the single car park, inclusive of drop-off. Please refer above to 2.1.2.

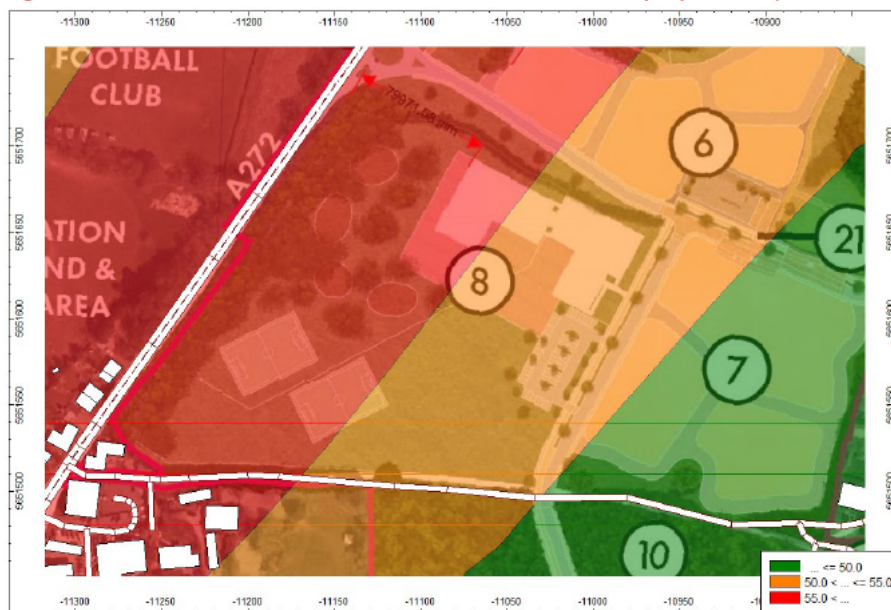
## 2.2 **Western Access Road layout drawing** – slope treatment, boundary and lack of footpath or cycleway

Without spot levels being provided on this drawing it is difficult to ascertain how the northern boundary will work with the slope. Also no detail is provided regarding the area between the carriageway and the existing hedgerow. It is not clear where the school boundary is located, nor what landscape treatment is planned to address the level change between the road and the hedge line, including root protection zones. There does not appear to be a footpath or cycle path adjacent to the road on the southern side of the carriageway. There could be an opportunity to support sustainable travel here, especially given the close proximity to the school sites.

## 2.3 Noise

2.3.1 The following graphic illustrates external noise levels affecting the school site. All the proposed school site is affected by noise levels above 50db, with levels in the red zone ranging from 55 to 69db. The Department for Education's Building Bulletin 93 requires school playgrounds to have a baseline less than 55db and outdoor teaching less than 50db. Were the proposed educational site to progress, the internal and external spaces would need to be carefully designed with enhanced acoustic treatment to mitigate the noise pollution.

Figure 9.2: Assessment of external noise levels for educational purposes  $L_{Aeq, 30mins}$



### 2.3.2 Further work required to establish whether barriers would be effective

Pg 60-64, 9.7, recognises that outside teaching is a requirement and that the noise levels are likely to have an adverse impact across all the site. The document suggests using barriers as design solutions. Further detail would be required before determining whether this would be sufficient. 9.11.7 states that BB93 internal noise guidelines can be met using a practical design approach, but only outlines residential solutions. The developer should note that for both SEND and Early Years Primary, free flow access to the outside is essential for pupils. Outdoor teaching is also an integral part of curriculum delivery. The developer should outline what design measures are proposed to mitigate the choice of educational site.

9.11.8 states that unscreened open spaces located within 120/130m of the A272 are likely to exceed the upper BS8233 guideline level of 55db. The proposed schools are located within this area and will be adversely impacted. The developer should submit proposals to mitigate the impact of this noise pollution without loss of usable educational land (eg creating a bunded buffer zone alongside the road, moving the school site boundary away from the A272, etc...)

## 2.4 Legal aspects

There are legal issues to be resolved which currently bind the school sites, and WSCC are awaiting confirmation from the developer that these legal issues have resolved.

Given that there needs to be more design work to overcome some of the constraints with the primary and SEND school site, and some work is required to resolve the legal impediments affecting the site, WSCC Education cannot currently support the decision to grant outline planning permission. We can only consider withdrawing our objections if these issues are resolved through further design work and evidence produced giving assurance that the legal issues can be lifted. We are happy to continue to work with the developer to identify solutions.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you wish to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,

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