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24.06.25 - AGC response letter to MSDC officer queries



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Dear Steve

Application DM/23/2866 – Outline planning application for Ansty Garden Community

Following on from the queries received from you on 8th April 2024, regarding the documents submitted as part of the above application, the project team have prepared the following documents and responses to address those concerns, accordingly please find attached the following documents, and a summary of each matters set out below.

Document Name	Prepared by	Reference number
Cycle Route Improvement Plan (Sheet 1)	Ardent	2207280-SK05 Rev E
Cycle Route Improvement Plan (Sheet 2)	Ardent	2207280-SK05.1 Rev E
PRoW technical note	Ardent	2207280-R22
Virtus Leisure Management letter	Virtus Leisure Management	May 2024
LVIA	Fabrik	May 2024
Heritage Response to Conservation Officer Feedback	Turley	May 2024
Long Section	Fabrik	1019 Rev P01 (Jun 2024)
Design Code	Fabrik/Create Streets	December 2023

- 1. There doesn't appear to be any street lighting propose along the proposed A272 cycle route, is this correct ? Can you also confirm that cycle route to Cuckfield on B2306 carriageway is also unlit.**

There will be street lighting alongside the proposed cycle routes. As per discussions with WSCC highways, lighting will be provided which will ensure the routes are available to commuters at all times of the year. To meet the required standards, lighting will need to be provided through standard street lighting columns. The inclusion of lighting is therefore shown in updated cycle route improvement plans included with this letter. The precise location of lighting will be finalised through a s278 agreement at the appropriate time.

- 2. I believe it's a point raised in the consultation responses, but can you confirm what improvements are proposed to off-site PRoWs ? Any improvements need to be detailed (or at least outlined) as part of the this application.**

Following on from meetings with the PRoW officer, it has been agreed that the Central East / West footpath (62CR) will be upgraded to a bridleway. The footpath from the centre of the Site to the existing bridleway to southeast (Footpath 69CR) will to remain a footpath. These changes are detailed in a



technical note (2207280-R22). The note also details that off site improvements to the bridleway 67CR/50bCU (the bridleway extending north east towards Tylers Green) will be limited to surface improvements with no widening provided. As this section lies outside of the site boundary, this will be achieved through utilising a local authority's right to maintain or improve a public right of way, funded by the applicant.

3. The proposed sports facilities, who is intended to run own/run them ? Will these be fully funded by the development?

The delivery of the sports facilities are intended to be fully funded by the development. A letter of interest is provided from Virtus Leisure Management as part of this response to give comfort that engagement has been undertaken and that there is interest in operating the facility (see May 2024 Virtus Leisure Management letter).

4. Reference is made of a community building linked to sports facilities – who will own/run this facility? Is this to be fully funded by the development ?

As with the above, the community building linked to the sports facilities is intended to be fully funded by the development. A letter of interest is provided from Virtus Leisure Management as part of this response to give comfort that engagement has been undertaken and that and there is interest in operating the facility.

5. The Lighting Assessment does not appear to really consider impact of floodlighting for the proposed sport facilities – this needs to be considered in relation to other aspects as well, including LVIA/heritage.

The Lighting Assessment at paragraph 7.8 considers the floodlighting to be installed for the sports facilities. Given the nature of the Outline planning application, it is not considered any further assessment is necessary at this stage. However, a specialist lighting assessment has been instructed to provide comfort for Officers and remove any uncertainty regarding potential impacts.

We can confirm the LVIA has previously considered the impact of floodlighting as part of its assessment of landscape and visual effects in Appendix V3.2 (in particular in relation to use of PRow footpath 8BCU (which would run alongside the sports area). The updated LVIA continues to identify that the all weather sports pitches will be floodlit and analyses the effects accordingly.

A Heritage response has been prepared to address comments received from the Conservation Officer. As part of this response, greater detail on potential floodlighting impact has been included. The response identifies that the introduction of floodlighting within the Main Site would not result in direct intervention to the identified heritage assets. The only way in which any potential floodlighting has the potential to impact the identified heritage asset's overall heritage significance is through a change in a part of their setting, which would be seasonal and only be in operation during certain times of the day. Therefore any potential change would be temporary and transient, and therefore all of the aspects of heritage significance derived from an assets intrinsic special architectural and historic interest, will be preserved.

6. Health Hub – what is included and is this to be fully funded/provided by the development ? Have you had discussions with the NHS regarding this ?

The HIA explored local health care capacity and demonstrated the need for increased and enhanced health care capacity, and the opportunity to provide a new resource that would both address current and future demand, but also facilitate the move to new models of health care that embed diagnostic and treatment in the community, and reduce pressure on acute and chronic health care. Currently, there is no GP in Ansty, there is a lack of rural provision, neighbouring capacity is limited, it remains challenging to entice, train and retain health care practitioners in older stock, and health care demand is increasing due to a larger and more aged population. The opportunity to explore and address this through spatial planning seemed prudent.

On behalf of Fairfax, Savills reached out to the Integrated Care Board (ICB) for their input into the proposals in September 2023. It was indicated during a telephone conversation that there is a need for more and improved health care stock. Subsequent interaction with the ICB in October confirmed a health care space would be welcomed in principle, given the absence of any GP in Ansty.

Given the project scale and local need, it was recommended by Savills to include 520sqm of space in the Outline planning application, which could accommodate 4 GP consultation rooms, training space, staff amenities, admin, IT, diagnostic and treatment space for allied health care and or social prescribing within the community.

This is captured on page 28 of the HIA:

“Initial engagement was sought with the Integrated Care Board regarding their needs and aspirations for health care in the area that might be accommodated through the application. In principle, the inclusion of a Health Hub was seen as positive. Further engagement is required to refine the viability, size and provision of the Health Hub”.

Funding was not specifically covered in the application, as further discussions were sought from the ICB beforehand to understand their health care aspirations, and explore how the space to best could best reinforce and enhance the local Primary Care Network. While data indicates the need for a health hub, should the ICB not want to strategically provide health care in Ansty, Fairfax remain open to other social value uses.

Fairfax intend to reach out to the ICB again and will update officers with the relevant details once this has occurred. Equally, Fairfax would welcome a face to face meeting with yourself and the ICB. Fairfax will explore with the ICB planning contributions/funding options, and importantly who they would be made to, be it NHS Estates, directly to a GP Partnership or to a Community Trust (where the community asset would generate a passive income for Ansty to invest back into the community).

7. Local centre – what local facilities intended ? If retail , how big? (500sqm triggers the need a for retail impact assessment)

The Local centre is intended as a mix of retail, commercial and flexible uses that fall under the Class E banner to allow movement between uses and enable shifts in provision as they are demanded. The range of uses are proposed to include:

- A local foodstore (positive engagement has been held with a National food retailer regarding the inclusion of one of their smaller stores, they have confirmed they would require 400sqm)
- Flexible Class E uses (such as a café / retail / offices)

- Community uses - such as a crèche, shared workspace and small gym/fitness studio
- A comprehensive health hub, with facilities that can include not only GP provision but also allied healthcare services, such as physiotherapy rooms, midwifery and adult social care
- Proposals for the care home to also include a community café

It is currently envisaged that within the Local Centre, Class E uses that there would not be more than 500sqm of retail, however this could be restricted by condition/provision above that threshold subject to an appropriate RIA if required.

8. School – what discussions with WSCC / funding/ delivery ?

Fairfax have engaged in discussions with WSCC Education from an early stage, with the first meetings held on 18th March 2022. Through these discussions, WSCC have identified a specific need for a 2FE primary school and a general requirement for a SEND school in the area. The early stages of discussion considered the provision of a secondary school, but it was concluded that this was not necessary. Further discussions have been held over the ensuing time period, including an on-site meeting in summer 2023 and most recently on 28th May 2024, to help guide and inform the submission.

9. How is the retained Ancient Woodland (and buffer) on and around the site going to be protected from pressure of use by residents, bearing in mind that there is currently no pressure on these areas of woodland ?

There are four areas of Ancient Woodland that are identified in the Site (north east, south east, north west, and central west). As set out in the submitted concept Masterplan and transport information, no new rights of way of pedestrian/cycle routes are proposed through the areas of Ancient Woodland. The mandatory buffer from the Ancient Woodland will be maintained at all times by the development and there will not be direct or future pressure arising as a result of the development proposals.

In terms of actively defending the Ancient Woodland from potential future access by people who have decided to venture from all recognised routes, it considered that there will be minimal pressures applied in this manner, given the location of the Ancient Woodland and the lack of benefit in cutting through them to shorten a journey, given the presence of waterways, sloping topography, and the presence of off-site private land immediately adjacent. However, as set out in the Ecological Impact Assessment (*Volume 4, Appendix G Ecology & Biodiversity*), the intention is for a graded ecotone of thorny scrub and tussocky grassland to be planted around retained woodland areas, and for areas of Ancient Woodland to be fenced.

As recognised in LN11 of the submitted Design Code, access to Ancient Woodland will be limited by design, ensuring minimal disturbance to wildlife and fauna. This can be achieved through the provision of post and rail fencing (or similar) to make a visual distinction regarding accessibility. More formal fencing of the woodland would negatively impact the integration and landscape appearance of the area. Given that this is an Outline application this level of detail has not been included at this time but should it be felt necessary, a planning condition requiring this detail could be included.

10. Are retained areas of woodland included calculations of public open space ? If so, what is the reasoning and how will their biodiversity value be protected ? (currently under no pressure).

Details of the land uses and open spaces proposed within the Site are set out on the Land Use page of the DAS (page 49). This identifies that the existing woodlands, including Ancient Woodlands (19.69ha), landscape buffers to landscape features such as Ancient Woodlands / trees / hedgerows /

watercourses etc. (6.50ha) and SuDS (0.8ha) are all excluded from the public open space calculation. Without the above, the proposed development provides 26.2ha of public open space, which is significantly more than the identified 9.4ha policy requirement for a development of this scale.

In terms of protecting biodiversity value, the landscape strategy and character areas have been designed to include areas of retained and enhanced landscape where areas of higher ecological value have been identified, these include the Ancient Woodlands and the grassland areas identified in the south east and north east of the site. Further detail can be found on pages 55-65 and page 75 of the DAS

11. How is the flexible residential/commercial ground floor uses zone meant to work ? What is this in reality ?

The idea is that buildings fronting these primary routes would effectively be zoned as Class E to allow them to be flexible between homes and a commercial use such as a café or corner shop. The Flexible class allows this to happen further down the line when the Site is built out (for example), and allows a commercial cluster or high street to form down the line. This avoids the need to specifically provide those uses up front, when the level of demand is unclear. It is exactly the kind of scenario envisioned by Class E.

Whilst what has been shown on the Land Use parameter plan is high level, the flexible area could be limited to around the town centre and junctions, rather than the entirety of those primary routes.

12. Having regard to the prevailing character of the location and the visual sensitivity of parts of the site, the extent of development is excessive and consideration should be given to significantly reducing the number of units and the form of development proposed. In addition, I am not convinced that the location is suitable for building heights up to 4 storey's in height.

The submitted LVIA presents a visual analysis of the site and surrounding study area, identifying the parts of the Site that are visible from the surrounding area and informing the disposition of land uses throughout the Site as presented as part of the analysis of the constraints and opportunities on pages 30-34 of the DAS. The approach to building heights has been informed by this analysis to locate areas of taller buildings in the more enclosed parts of the Site to minimise visual impact as far as possible. The submitted LVIA included four VVM's to demonstrate how the proposed development would be viewed from key locations in the surrounding landscape. In response to Landscape Officer comments, four additional VVMs have been commissioned to further demonstrate the visual impacts of the proposed development and these are included within an updated LVIA which is submitted with this response.

With regard to the appropriateness of four storeys, a full site cross-section drawing has been prepared, to set out visually how the development location and densities have been considered in context with the sites rolling topography. This demonstrates that, when considering the Holy Trinity Church and Cuckfield cemetery as a starting point, all of the development proposals will be below the view line from that location, and, through a combination of topography and existing woodland, the development proposals will be heavily screened and/or not visible. The locations within the site where development greater than 2 storeys is proposed is therefore considered to be suitable and appropriate.

13. Apart from the open space around The Place, all other proposed open space is peripheral to the site and the proposed residents its meant to serve. I do not consider that woodland provides a suitable 'open space' provision for a development.

As set out above, woodland is excluded from the open space calculations.

The approach to green infrastructure and open space has looked to deliver a connected network of green and open spaces that respond to the constraints and characteristics of the Site and provide opportunities for play and informal recreation throughout the Site. As identified, the Common set around The Place is the central public open space that is intended to be a focal point of the new community in close proximity to the local centre, schools, retirement community and residential areas. It is connected by the street network, proposed bus network and by a series of green corridors that provide attractive, off-street walking and cycling opportunities. The Common itself is approximately 2.6ha in size and forms a significant open space in a central location that also responds to the setting of The Place and views from the PRow network to the north.

The sports hub is located in the north of the site and its offer of hockey, tennis and padel has been designed to complement wider provision within Ansty, Cuckfield and Mid-Sussex. Page 66 of the DAS demonstrates the approach to the play strategy within the Site with one NEAP, three LEAPs and numerous LAPs ensuring every dwelling is within policy compliant walking distances of a play space. Three community food growing areas are located in the north, south and central parcels of the Site to ensure equal accessibility. Other areas of open space are located in parts of the Site where a response to identified constraints such as to protect grasslands of higher ecological value (south east and north east of the Site) and to retain an open setting to the High Weald National Landscape (north west of the site) have been identified.

As described above, the proposed development provides 26.2ha of public open space, which is significantly more than the identified 9.4ha policy requirement for a development of this scale. The location of these spaces has been defined to balance the response to identified site features and constraints, with the needs for appropriate accessibility to encourage active and healthy lifestyles

14. The proposal has no real centre, with facilities not co-located and a distance from a large proportion of the proposed units. I'm aware of the comments of the Design South East Panel, and I don't consider that they have been addressed.

The design team has undertaken a thorough review of the location of the local centre and considered alternatives within the masterplan.

Through this process, the team have concluded that the cluster of local centre, mobility hub, retirement village and two schools creates a strong heart to the Site, and the co-location of these uses is beneficial to all for a number of reasons, not least health and wellbeing and vibrancy of the local centre.

In addition, the local centre is located adjacent to the western access to the scheme, which from subsequent discussions with bus route operators could potentially form one of the main bus access routes, as well as on a key junction between vehicular routes and off-road pedestrian routes within the scheme. This places the local centre along a main movement route. The location is also within a short walking distance for the existing residents of Ansty, as well as being accessible by foot or cycle to all new dwellings, which provides a benefit for the existing community. Regarding the creation of activity, the location of the sports hub a short walk away from the local centre and schools will create activity via residents walking across Ansty Common and through the Site to get between the two.

Alternative layouts, such as evaluating the potential for locating a centre on the main avenue where it meets the east-west PRow have been examined. However through all of the detailed analysis and examination of potential options, it was determined that any alternative approach would have resulted in the delivery of a proposal that was inferior to that which has been prepared and submitted as part of the application.

We hope the above responses and accompanying appendices address the questions / concerns you expressed within your email. We would welcome a meeting to discuss the above, and provide an update on meetings with WSCC highways as well as other key consultees.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G Wilson", with a stylized, flowing script.

Graham Wilson BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI
Associate