



TO: Planning Committee South

BY: Head of Development and Building Control

DATE: 20th July 2021

DEVELOPMENT: A phased development for the erection of 6no detached houses (of which up to 4no are to be self-build) with associated landscaping, drainage and access improvements to Heather Way at Angell Sandpit, Storrington

SITE: Angell Sand Pit, Washington Road, Storrington, West Sussex

WARD: Storrington

APPLICATION: DC/21/0057

APPLICANT: **Name:** MiBri Ltd **Address:** Angell Sandpit, Heather Way, Storrington

REASON FOR INCLUSION ON THE AGENDA: By request of the Parish Council.

More than eight persons in different households have made written representations raising material planning considerations that are inconsistent with the recommendation of the Head of Development.

RECOMMENDATION: To approve the application, subject to the previously recommended planning conditions.

1. ASSESSMENT

- 1.1 This application was presented at Planning Committee South, 20th July 2021, where members resolved that the application be deferred to allow for the scheme to be amended to include a more appropriate mix of dwellings with a greater number of smaller 2 and 3-bed units.
- 1.2 Since this resolution the applicants have considered the committee's request but have not made any changes to the proposal. Instead, the applicants have provided a viability report for the current scheme to seek to demonstrate that the proposal on offer returns a profit of 5%, considerably lower than the industry standard of 20%. This profit is based on a set land value that even if excluded to nil cost, would result in a profit level of around 7.5%. These figures are being independently assessed by the Council's viability consultant and an update will be provided for the committee meeting. The low development return is based on the high costs of remediating and stabilising the land.
- 1.3 In the absence of an alternative proposal that reflects the committee's desire for more smaller dwellings on the site, either in replacement of the existing or additional to the existing

proposed, the application continues to be assessed against Policy 2iii of the Storrington, Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Plan in its current guise.

- 1.4 The scheme, as submitted, and as previously presented to members, proposes a development of 6 individually designed detached houses, envisaged to reflect the site's sloping topography and appearing principally as single-storey dwellings, so retaining a very low-level type of development, 'hunkered down' into the landscape. Furthermore, the site's proposed layout incorporated the required 20m buffer zone to the SSSI adjoining the northern boundary, as well as the 45m buffer to the Grade 2 listed cottages to the eastern side.
- 1.5 As set out in the previous committee report appended to this update, the proposals are considered to meet the requirements of all parts of the Policy set out below in bold and as follows:

Land at Angell Sandpit, Storrington as shown on the Policies Map, is allocated for housing to accommodate a minimum of 6 dwellings.

The Neighbourhood Plan Inspector amended the wording of the policy 'accommodate **a minimum** of 6 dwellings', as he considered that restricting the potential allocated development to just 6 dwellings would not be making the most of the site's potential capacity, if there was the aspiration to include 2 and 3-bed dwellings. It is this aspiration which led discussions at the committee meeting on 20th July 2021, with the current proposal not considered to address the parish need for smaller dwellings that are affordable for younger people or those wishing to downsize.

The development of the area will be required to:

- a. Deliver a mix of housing types and sizes including 2 and 3 bedroom properties;**
Whilst the aspiration at the time of the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan may have been for this site to provide small units for potential occupation by local first-time buyers and downsizers, the policy does not set out the number or size of such small units to be provided. Based on the wording of the policy, the requirement is simply that the mix of housing should include 2 and 3 bedroom homes as part of a broader mix.

As it stands, the proposals meet this requirement by providing one 2-bed and one 3-bed dwelling as part of a broader mix. An argument to refuse planning permission on the basis that the proposed 2 and 3-bed dwellings are of insufficient number or likely to be too large and costly to be attractive to first time buyers or downsizers is not sustainable against this policy wording which has otherwise been complied with.

- b. Demonstrate that the land can safely be developed for housing, bearing in mind the site's previous use of a landfilled mineral excavation;**
Subject to pre-commencement conditions and the site being developed comprehensively to a certain level, the proposal meets this requirement, as set out in the original committee report

- c. Protect the open and green setting to the west of the grade II listed building with a buffer zone of at least 45 metres between the listed building and the development. Development to the eastern section of the site should be single storey;**
Both parts of the policy are achieved by way of the proposal as set out in the original committee report

- d. Provide tree and hedgerow planting within the site to reflect the wooded character of the surrounding area;**
The proposed planting demonstrates tree / woodland planting in the centre and hedgerows with other biodiversity enhancements across the site, as set out in the original committee report.

- e. **Provide a buffer zone of at least 20 metres to the Sullington Warren Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) with enhancements to nature conservation incorporated into this area; and**

The proposal achieves this required buffer zone, as set out in the original committee report

- f. **Ensure sensitive positioning of the units to preserve potential views available from the South Downs National Park**

The proposed single-storey design, set into the sloping site, would retain and preserve views available from the SDNP, as set out in the original committee report.

- 1.6 Since the previous committee resolution, the Council's Landscape Architect has reviewed the current proposal for 6 dwellings and makes the following comments in response to the potential for an increased level of development across the site;

"For various reasons, the site is subject to a number of development constraints including the topography and potential visibility from the SDNP, and the adjacent public footpaths being the key issues from a landscape point of view. Increasing the quantum of development and in turn the footprint of the built environment would be likely to result in unacceptable harm to the character and visual amenity of the area but also harm to views from the SDNP and the special qualities of the National Park.

The development pattern of the area is described as mostly detached dwellings that sit in large plots of land. This significantly contributes to the retention of the wooded character of the area, particularly when appreciated from the Downs as the generous plots allow for generous planting which soften the appearance of development.

The (potential) increase in quantum of development would reduce opportunities to mitigate harm by virtue of the reduction of open space within the gardens which will reduce the opportunities for tree and more substantial planting, likely to increase the need for more engineered cut and fill as more building platforms would be required, the increase of additional urbanising features such as plot partition fences, parking, and general domestic paraphernalia such as sheds, paddling pools, trampolines etc., and overall increase of activity, which results in a moderate increase of the negative effect on tranquillity.

For the reasons above, I am of the view that the site is unlikely to have landscape capacity to accommodate more quantum of development without resulting in harm as the mechanism for mitigation would likely be limited."

Conclusion

- 1.7 It is understood that the proposed development of 6 dwellings on this site may not achieve the desired quantum of smaller family-sized dwellings that are affordable to young families or downsizers. However, the site presents a number of particular constraints that impact on the eventual development that could be achieved whilst creating a form of development that respects and acknowledges the wider topography, pattern of development, heritage and nature values.
- 1.8 As presented, the current proposal for 6 dwellings takes into account those specific site constraints, such as the buffer zones, visual sensitivities of the adjacent landscape, the nearby SDNP and the heritage assets, and respects the interaction between the site and neighbouring properties.
- 1.9 Most importantly though, the proposals provide a 2-bed and 3-bed dwelling to meet the requirements of the policy. It is the wording of the policy that is required to be complied with,

not any aspiration that may have underpinned its drafting or intent. The advice of officers is therefore that there are no grounds to refuse planning permission for providing an insufficient number or size of 2 and 3-bed dwellings.

- 1.10 Whilst it is disappointing that the applicant has not advanced an alternative proposal that provides for more 2 and 3-bed dwellings as part of an enlarged scheme, as noted by the Council's Landscape Architect, it is likely that a denser scheme, potentially yielding an increased quantum of development, would result in harmful impacts elsewhere. This includes from the necessary additional built form required to deal with the ground stability and contamination remediation, level changes, yielding less opportunities for meaningful landscaping features. Increased development of this site would also lead to additional associated traffic movements, the need to accommodate more parking to serve a greater number of units and the likely need to build upwards to a two-storey level in order to accommodate the increased development across the site, thus leading to increased visual massing that would become more prominent in a number of viewpoints, including from the SDNP.
- 1.11 Officers recognise that the above comments are merely speculative, as no increased development quantum has been presented for comment, but understand the complexities of the site sufficiently to envisage the implications involved in an alternative proposal.
- 1.12 Therefore, officers consider the recommendation to approve planning permission remains appropriate and in accordance with neighbourhood, local and national planning policies. This proposal reflects a solution to development on this site and to provide 6 dwellings in accordance with the envisioned housing growth in the parish and district. Furthermore, the proposed layout, design and development quantum takes a balanced account of the site's particular constraints and limitations, and the desire to achieve a high quality form of development that is commensurate with the wider setting and adjoining development pattern.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To approve planning permission, subject to the previously set out list of conditions.