

Planning Policy Team
Adur and Worthing Councils
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ADUR LOCAL PLAN: AMENDMENTS TO THE PROPOSED SUBMISSION ADUR LOCAL PLAN (2016)

This representation is made by the landowners of the Steyning Road/Gateway site -

Cobbetts Developments Ltd. Marehill House, West Mare Lane, Pulborough, West Sussex RH20 2EN and the company directors:

Robert Thornton.

William Thornton.

Sussanah Kelsall.

This representation is made in addition to previous representations both in respect of the plan as a whole and the aforementioned site. In due course, the company and its directors would welcome participating in the hearings of the Public Examination.

Objections as to Soundness

The plan is unsound and has not been positively prepared because it does not seek to meet its objectively assessed housing needs. The plan is also unsound because it is not justified in its under delivery of housing and neither can it demonstrate that it has adopted the most appropriate strategy when properly considered against all reasonable alternatives. This is evident by its exclusion of the Steyning Road/Gateway site.

The OAN figures have been updated since the previous version of the plan and now demonstrate a requirement for a greater number of dwellings. However the proposed amended plan shows an even greater shortfall, currently up from the 2014 version of between 1162-1312 to a current undersupply of 2,211 (this represents a 40% unfulfilled housing supply). This is contrary to the specific requirements of the NPPF whereby local plans must fully meet their identified needs for housing. Consequently, the policy team needs to give greater consideration to other sites within the urban fringe, and should allocate the Steyning Road/Gateway site for future housing.

Since the amended version of the plan was published, planning approval has been given to the Environment Agency's TWS. This includes an amendment to the originally proposed scheme for reach 3, whereby the southern half of the Steyning Road/Gateway site will now benefit from enhanced flood defenses (up to 1/200 year AEP) making it more suitable for housing, from a flood risk perspective, than

previously considered. The scheme will now provide enhanced and new defenses to safeguard an area of approximately one hectare, or potentially up to 35 dwellings, as well as provide protection for Shoreham to the south. However, despite the policy team being made aware of our collaboration with the EA, they have continued to reject the site based on landscape and visual impact concerns. However, the site is no more constrained by landscape and visual impact than the other major sites being proposed. In general they have attributed far too much weight to these concerns, given the severity of constraints within the district and the severity of the shortfall in unmet housing needs. This is in part because some of the evidence based studies are not credible or consistent in their evaluations and conclusions, whilst the conclusions and recommendations of others have just been ignored.

This is clearly demonstrated by the *Landscape Study Update 2016* by Sheils Flynn, which uses the same methodology and criteria as the earlier *Landscape & Ecology Study 2012*, (by the same authors) to assess a number of Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). The updated report takes into consideration changes in the landscape, including the newly built Brighton & Hove training ground in the south east corner of the Gap and the proposed ATW scheme. It also draws conclusions based on the allocation of land at New Monks Farm and Shoreham Airport, although these sites are proposed land allocations and not yet adopted. Therefore any assessment based on the assumption of their inclusion within the plan are premature. The key viewpoints in both reports, to assess visual sensitivity, are the same, however, LCAs which are not included within the proposed version of the plan have had their scores changed to reflect a more negative outcome, whilst those LCAs that are included as land allocations within the plan have remained unchanged. Whilst such evidence based studies are supposed to form an independent and unbiased view, it does appear that the updated version includes amendments to support the policy team's view that these alternative sites are not suitable for allocation. However, these conclusions fly in the face of the earlier 2012 Sheils Flynn report, which scored the Steyning Road/Gateway site as "medium-Low" for Landscape Sensitivity, Visual Sensitivity and Overall Landscape Sensitivity and the *Urban Fringe Study 2006*, which concluded the site had a "low" environmental impact, "low" contribution to landscape and "low" importance to the strategic gap.

Evidence to support this is given in more detail in our previous representation.

Further comments are made about the veracity of the Sheils Flynn Landscape update 2016 within the appendix.

Changes to Policy 2 *Spatial Strategy* and Policy 14 *Local Green Gaps*

The Submission Local Plan should include a policy whereby all sites previously identified by the *Urban Fringe Study 2006*, which will benefit from enhanced flood defenses, afforded by the recently approved ATW scheme, should be allocated for housing to meet the OAN shortfall or, if not required within the plan period, safeguarded for future needs beyond the plan period, as required under NPPF guidance. (para 147. 'Crucially, Local Plans should:...take account of longer term requirements'.)

Landscape and visual impact issues concerning the Local Green Gaps have been grossly overstated. Much of this land is of poor landscape quality and the weight of argument for retaining parts of its fringe are unjustified given the context of –

- (a) a severely constrained district from a topographical perspective,
- (b) a severe shortfall in unmet housing needs, including affordable housing,
- (c) a shortage of deliverable land supply for a 5 year period,
- (d) the vast, superior and heavily protected landscape amenity of the SDNP.

The original purpose of the Gap was to prevent the coalescence of the conurbations of Shoreham, Lancing and Worthing. Any land that does not make a significant contribution to the integrity of the gap should be given greater consideration for allocation for future development, including the Steyning Road/Gateway site, which was described by the UFS 2016 as having:

'[a] tenuous visual relationship with rest of the gap to the south west' and 'LOW importance to the strategic gap'

and by the Landscape & Ecology Report 2012 as:

'...a small, narrow part of the Lancing Gap and [which] seems disconnected from it'.

The allocation of 15,000sqm of employment space adjacent to the eastern bank of the river just south of the Ricardos industrial plant will further increase this sense of separation from the rest of the gap. In fact the site will become completely disconnected, effectively enclosed by development on the eastern side of the river.

Summary

The Steyning Road/Gateway site should be omitted from the local gap and allocated within the plan for housing. In addition to the arguments outlined in previous representations, the following *enabling factors* have since come to fruition:

1. an approved planning application for the ATW flood defense scheme, which protects the site from future flooding to a level now appropriate for new housing but also protects existing housing, employment and infrastructure within the wider area of Shoreham town to the south.
2. an agreed access with WSCC Highways
3. substantial funding secured by Adur District Council from the Government's Local Growth Fund and additional funding from other agencies, in order to realize the ATW flood defence scheme, which makes it very hard to understand why the local authority would not wish to maximize the cost benefit from safeguarding this site for future development.

Appendix

Email from Robert Thornton to Adur policy team commenting on the Adur Landscape Study Update - Shoreham Gateway by Sheils Flynn 2016

From: "Robert Thornton" [REDACTED]

Date: 1 February 2016 17:04:40 GMT

To: "Moirra Hayes" [REDACTED], "William David Thornton"

Cc: "James Appleton" [REDACTED], "Ben Daines"

Subject: 1207 Steyning Road, Shoreham - Re: Landscape report: Shoreham Gateway

Dear Moira,

Thank you for the issue of your Landscape Report, in respect of our site. We note that it is not named as a draft and have serious concerns about its current status given that it is riddled with factual inaccuracies, contradictions and misleading summary statements. Therefore, we respectfully request that this report is taken out of public circulation, until we can come back to you in more detail. However, please note the following:-

- The report states that the embankment to the river is to be raised by 4m, as part of the EA's Tidal Wall Scheme, when it is being raised by 400mm.
- The report re-assesses the Landscape Character Sensitivity as 'Medium', when the same author's Landscape & Ecology Report 2012 stated that it was 'Medium/Low', previously.
- The report re-assesses the Visual Sensitivity as 'Medium/High', when the same author's Landscape & Ecology Report 2012 stated that it was 'Medium/Low', previously.
- The report states that the screening vegetation, to our site, on the existing east river embankment will be removed by the EA's Tidal Wall works, when the authors have no authoritative knowledge that this will be the case, while we have minutes, from one of many meetings with the EA, in which the EA stated that they had redesigned their raised embankment proposal,) so as not to affect the existing vegetation, except where the embankment necessarily crosses our site.
- The report contains a very misleading image from the west bank of the river, just north of the toll bridge, which suggests that our residential proposal extends across the west face of St Nicholas' Church and over the top of all or part of three properties to the south of our site, which we do not own, when clear views of the Church will be maintained.
- The report's summary is laced with negative language and suggests that there is no way of visually mitigating the impact of development on our site, whilst the same authors wrote in glowing terms how 30,000sq m of employment development in the airfield could be mitigated with green roofs, etc.

These are just a few of the matters we have identified. A fuller response will be forwarded, in due course, However, as you know, we are meeting the Costal West Sussex Design Review Panel tomorrow and we very much hope that they have not been briefed on the basis of such a flawed report, as we were hoping to get some constructive feedback. In the meantime, we believe it would be sensible if you change its status to 'draft' at the very least, until it can be amended.

Regards,

Robert Thornton

Thornton **architecture + design**