

Memorandum

To: Paul Howson

CC.

From: Piran Cooper

Date: 14th February 2017

Re: **Y16/0623/SH Little Densole Farm, Canterbury Road LVIA**

The proposed development is for land adjacent to Densole within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). *The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important protected landscape, whose special characteristics include its dramatic landform and views; rich habitats, extensive ancient woodland, mixed farmland; historic and built heritage and its tranquility and remoteness.*ⁱ

The primary purpose of the AONB designation is to:

- *Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape*

Two secondary aims complement the purpose

- *To meet the need for quiet enjoyment of the countryside*
- *To have regard for the interests of those who live and work there*ⁱⁱ

This is critical in terms of the evaluation of the scheme.

The site lies within a strip of open pasture and arable land that is bordered by Reinden Woods and Densole. The development proposed is for a small holiday park with associated landscaping and service road. These are viewed as one single element for these purposes.

The methodology for the LVIA is considered to be compliant with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Ed. published by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental management and assessment (the guidelines).

In terms of the LVIA it is important that the document recognises what the value of the designation means in today's context. The strategic vision and direction for the AONB is overseen by the Kent Downs AONB unit, who are also influential in its protection. The area is valued by local residents and visitors for the reasons that are already stated in the introductory paragraph.

In summary the LVIA assessment concludes that the overall significance of impact of the development on the landscape is generally negligible with some benefits.

An assessment of landscape effects deals with the effects of change and development on landscape as a resource.ⁱⁱⁱ

Landscapes are comprised from landscape elements; trees, fields, lanes, hedgerows etc. It is the manner in which these elements are combined that forms landscape character. This proposal is for a low density holiday village set within a matrix of native trees and shrubs. Whilst the proposals have been carefully considered the screening vegetation will develop into what is essentially a block of woodland serviced by a track in what is currently an open area. Given the AONB designation this could be considered incongruous within the existing landscape because of the scale, nature and arrangement of the development. These sentiments signify that the landscape effects of the development are not negligible but are more significant.

The viewpoints selected for the LVIA are well placed in publicly accessible areas around the proposed site and to these ends provide comprehensive cover. What has not been considered is the impact of the development on local residents. Whilst there is some conjecture within the guidelines about the use of private viewpoints (para. 6.17) the fact that housing is very visible from the proposed site would suggest that there would be an impact on residents and as residents are permanent visual receptors the impact of the development would be more significant than is suggested in the report.

Summary

- Inherent in the value of the AONB designation is landscape sensitivity.
- The impact of the components of the development need to be considered as one within the context of the setting within the AONB.
- The manner in which the components are considered may increase the significance of landscape effects from the proposed development.
- The recognition of the impact of the proposed development on residents is also something that is worthy of consideration.

ⁱ <http://www.kentdowns.org.uk/about-the-aonb/landscape-character>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/further-information-about-aonbs.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Para 5.1 Guidelines for landscape and Visual Impact Assessment