

From: Paul Johnston
Sent: 07 July 2015 09:00
To: Andrew Rushmer
Subject: RE: Yew Tree Farm - Kingsclere Neighbourhood Plan

Hi Andrew

Further to your email below, I have been able to look at the attachments and queries that you have sent through and would like to advise the following.

Firstly, given that there is currently very limited detail provided with respect to the site plans, it has not been possible to complete a full landscape assessment of the proposals. As you can appreciate, details such as layout, housing size, access positions, location and distribution of open space and vegetation (existing and proposed) within the development, materials etc, will all determine the level of impact on both the landscape character and the visual amenity of the area. Without this, any assessment is inevitably more limited. Therefore, all of my comments below are made in this context and may be modified as further information becomes available. If any further info is available then it will help provide a greater degree of certainty.

As the AONB management plan notes, any new housing site should be located on land of lesser environmental value outside the designation area. One of these two sites is within the AONB (Site A) and the other is on its boundary, with parts of the AONB in close proximity (Site B). Having visited the sites, I think it would be reasonable to treat both sites as if they were within the AONB, given its proximity and nature. Therefore, my first question is, have any other sites outside the AONB been considered? If so, these should perhaps be considered for further assessment in terms of suitability.

With respect to the consultant's assessment of both sites and the conclusions reached, it must be born in mind that this is an assessment of existing condition, and not an assessment of impacts that will result following development. As noted above, further information will need to be provided to enable this to be done. My comments relate to chapters 5 and 6 of the report, as these provide the summaries of the assessment.

Site A (Yew Tree Farm)

In general, the consultant has made a reasonably fair assessment of the existing condition of the site. However, the following should be noted:-

- The site is in a prominent location, at the entrance/exit to the Kingsclere and therefore will be more sensitive to development. At present, the transition between the village and countryside is rather gradual, with linear development, located in generous plots, leading towards the more rural countryside. It is considered that this could change dramatically with a far higher housing density.
- There is extensive vegetation within the site and this will contribute to any screening and is a significant part of the verdant character of the site. Whilst it is noted that some of these will be retained, having a brief look at what is there, it is considered that given the size and

spread of some vegetation, the landform and numbers of housing proposed, that rather more will need to be removed than may be envisaged. This will be particularly an issue when development affects rootzones or the impact of shading on adjacent properties is considered.

- The land is naturally rising, so, depending on the heights and layout of development, this might cause more of an impact on visual amenity from higher ground.
- I would disagree with the point made in the assessment, that any development would improve the landscape and biodiversity interest of the site – the replacement of green areas with areas of housing and tarmac, along with the potential loss of vegetation within the site will reduce the extent of potential habitats.

Site B (Poveys Mead)

- This site is more divorced from the settlement, having a character that is closely related to the surrounding land that extends into the AONB and is therefore sensitive to development. This is particularly an issue as the site is closer to a network of rights of way that extend from the AONB.
- The site has a significant change in level and therefore, housing could be more prominent and the earthworks required to achieve required levels and gradients could also add to any impacts.
- At present, there is an open outlook from Poveys Mead, and this sense of openness is apparent from views between properties. Any development will change this introducing more enclosure and an overbearing impact on properties on lower ground. It is suggested that vegetation could mitigate, this but potentially could add to the sense of overbearing.
- Again, I would disagree that any development would improve the landscape and biodiversity interest of the site – the replacement of green areas with areas of housing and tarmac, along with the potential loss of vegetation within the site will reduce the extent of potential habitats.

Therefore, in summary, it is considered that details of other potential sites outside the AONB should be explored in the first instance and also in order to make a full assessment on the impacts on the landscape character and visual amenity of sites A and B on the AONB, that further information should be provided.

I trust that this is clear, however, please contact me if you have any queries.

Regards

Paul

Paul Johnston

Natural Environment Team Leader

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

Internet: www.basingstoke.gov.uk

Follow us on Twitter [@twitter.com/BasingstokeGov](https://twitter.com/BasingstokeGov)