

Planning Services
East Hampshire District Council
Penns Place
Petersfield
GU31 4EX

Our Ref: n/a
Your Ref: EH-586-IE
Email: andy@southernplanning.co.uk
Date: 27/01/23
Status: Submitted by E-mail

Dear Sir / Madam

Re: Planning application for the partial retention of bank and fence and proposed soft landscaping at Keepers Lodge, Basingstoke Road, Alton, GU34 4AB

We act on behalf of Mr and Mrs P O'Brien and have been instructed to lodge a planning application for the partial retention of a bank and fence and proposed landscaping at the above property.

The application is submitted via the Planning Portal and is accompanied by the following:

- Site Location Plan at 1:1250 scale (ref: 2203-PL-01);
- Existing Block Plan prepared by Voller Architectural Design;
- Existing Sections prepared by Voller Architectural Design;
- Supporting landscape information prepared by Indigo Landscape Architects;
- Detailed planting proposals prepared by Indigo Landscape Architects

This letter comprises the applicant's Planning Statement.

Planning Statement

This Planning Statement will begin by describing the site and its surroundings. It will then explain the planning history, set out the proposal and review policy before detailing the rationale and justification for the project in the context of policy.

Site and Location

Keepers Lodge is a detached dwelling positioned in the south east corner of an area of land extending to approximately 3.44 hectares. The site is bounded by Medstead Road to the south and Basingstoke Road (A339) to the east. The property is situated approximately 1.8km from Alton Town Centre.

The wider site accommodates a number of buildings, structures and chattels unrelated to this planning application. The bank subject of this planning application is situated to the north of the dwelling adjacent to the A339 and runs in a north – south orientation. The bank comprises

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a low earth mound which is approximately 64m long and 2.9m wide at its widest point. The bank is no higher than 2m.

Planning History

The bank was constructed along the eastern boundary of the applicant's land as a result of ground levelling works that had taken place on site. A boundary fence was subsequently erected on top of the bank.

Following these works the applicant was served an enforcement notice by East Hampshire District Council dated 23rd August 2018.

The notice required:

“Dig up the engineering operation (bund) in the approximate position marked with a heavy blue line on the attached plan and remove all the resultant debris from the Land.”

The enforcement notice was subsequently appealed under reference APP/M1710/C/18/3211089. The notice was upheld by appeal decision dated 6th January 2020.

Since the appeal decision the applicant has removed most of the fence from on top of the bank and has regraded the western slope of the bank to flatten its profile and reduce its overall impact. It now has the appearance of a bank.

Application Proposals

The proposal is to retain the modified bank as it now stands and, move existing containers away from the bank to allow sufficient room to implement a comprehensive scheme of soft landscaping as detailed within the report and plan prepared by Indigo Landscape Architects.

The landscaping scheme will comprise:

- Planting of a native hedgerow along the top of the bank along the eastern boundary;
- Supplementary planting of understory shrubs where gaps exist on eastern boundary, and
- Tree planting on eastern boundary.

Relevant Planning Policy

Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan for the area in which the site is located comprises the adopted policies within the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy (2014), the 'saved' policies

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of the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Second Review (2006) and the policies contained within the Beech Neighbourhood Plan (2020).

The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) has been prepared jointly by East Hampshire District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority, with the latter now separated with its own Local Plan. It guides the way in which new development, including housing and employment, will be planned up to 2028. The JCS was adopted by both Councils in June 2014 and replaces many of the policies of the East Hampshire Local Plan Second Review (March 2006) which was, until then, the only development plan document for the area. The most relevant Core Strategy Policy is CP20 (Landscape). The policy states that:

The special characteristics of the district's natural environment will be conserved and enhanced. New development will be required to:

a) conserve and enhance the natural beauty, tranquillity, wildlife and cultural heritage of the South Downs National Park and its setting, and promote the opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities, and be in accordance with the ambitions within the emerging South Downs Management Plan;

b) protect and enhance local distinctiveness sense of place and tranquillity by applying the principles set out in the district's Landscape Character Assessments, including the Community/Parish Landscape Character Assessments;

c) protect and enhance settlements in the wider landscape, land at the urban edge and green corridors extending into settlements;

d) protect and enhance natural and historic features which contribute to the distinctive character of the district's landscape, such as trees, woodlands, hedgerows, soils, rivers, river corridors, ditches, ponds, ancient sunken lanes, ancient tracks, rural buildings and open areas;

e) incorporate appropriate new planting to enhance the landscape setting of the new development which uses local materials, native species and enhances biodiversity;

f) maintain, manage and enhance the green infrastructure networks (see Policy CP28 Green Infrastructure).

Priority will be given to working with landowners and others in order to ensure that land management practices improve public access to the countryside, conserve and enhance valued landscapes of major importance for wild flora and fauna, and restore landscapes where valued features have been lost or degraded.

The Beech Neighbourhood Development Plan sets out a number of policies, which have the aim of preserving the characteristics of the village and facilitating change that will ensure the vibrancy of the community in the future. The policies address the protection of the countryside and local amenities, support local businesses and set standards for housing development. Within the plan Policy BCP03 states that:

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Development will not be permitted in the non-coalescence area shown on Map 3 if, individually or cumulatively, it would result in reducing the visual and/or physical separation between Beech and Alton or otherwise diminish their separate and distinctive identities.

The application site is situated within the non coalescence area.

Planning Justification

The remaining part of the bank is in and amongst the existing screen vegetation. As other ruderal vegetation has taken hold, and the remains of the bank has weathered in it is no longer noticeable within the street scene. It therefore would be sensible not to create a new visual scar through the removal of the bank which would necessitate the removal of vegetation in the process.

The applicant takes the issue very seriously and has therefore taken expert landscape advice to mitigate further the residual effects of retaining the bank. The advice received from Indigo Landscape Architects concludes that once the proposed native hedgerow, tree and understorey shrub planting along the eastern boundary of the Site is established, it would present a cohesive boundary along the A339, further screening the regraded bank and the Site from users of the road. This would result in a significant improvement over the current situation and an overall enhancement from how the boundary appeared prior to the bank being installed.

It should be noted that the applicant has experienced a break-in in recent months, due to the removal of part of the fence. The applicant has also had occurrences of his cows and dogs escaping from the site and walking onto the road.

In order to retain security whilst the proposed hedgerow establishes we are proposing to move the existing fence (and erect new where there is none) to inside (west of) the hedgerow. The retention of the fence will undoubtedly help avoid animals escaping, help deter break-ins and generally improve the security of the site in accordance with the aims of NPPF para. 97 and para. 7.7 of the Joint Core Strategy.

The hedgerow will soften and screen the fence to reduce its impact. See photos overleaf.

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In addition, the extra planting will, aside from visually enhancing the road and reducing any residual effect of the remaining part of the bank and fence, enhance a green corridor for wildlife.

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It is concluded therefore that the proposals will meet the aims and objectives of Policy CP20 by introducing new appropriate landscaping to the roadside edge, enhance a green corridor, and mitigating views that may damage an appreciation of the wider landscape and re-enforcing the separate identities of Beech and Alton and avoiding their coalescence in accordance with Neighbourhood Plan Policy BCP03.

It is considered that the benefits of the proposal justify the retention of the remaining part of the bank and movement of the fence, but in the event of the application is dismissed then the applicant will fulfil his obligations and remove these elements.

Conclusions

The steps that the applicant has taken and the proposals put forward will go above and beyond the requirements of the enforcement notice. Whilst part of the bank will be retained, it has been regraded, and comprehensive scheme of native landscaping is proposed. This will result in an enhancement to the boundary which is considered to meet the aims of adopted policy and represents an acceptable form of development.

Yours sincerely



**Andy Partridge, BSc (Hons) Dip UP MRTPI
Director**

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