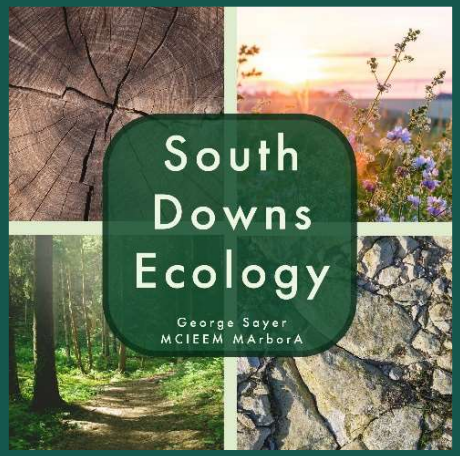
Ecosystems Services Statement

Land Adjacent to The Watermill, Halfway Bridge



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Version 1 – 21st February 2024

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Contents

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Newman Developments Ltd have commissioned an Ecosystems Services Statement of proposals for residential development on land adjacent to The Watermill, Halfway Bridge, Lodwsorth (SU 93117 21983).

1.2 The report provides assessment of the impacts of the proposals on ecosystem services provided by the site, as requested by Core Policy SD2 of the South Downs National Park (*SDNP*) Authority, within which the site area sits.

1.3 The following ecosystem services statement has been completed by George Sayer (BSc (Hons) Environmental Sciences, PgDip Endangered Species Recovery, MArborA, MCIEEM, NE Licence Holder – Bats Level 2 and GCN - Ecologist).

Site Description and Surrounding Area

1.4 The site consists of an existing flat roofed building, previous used for commercial purposes, most recently offices and storage. The site lies on the eastern bank of the River Rother with trees and grassland along the bank. An area of asphalt lies to the west with Halfway Bridge beyond it. On the western side of Halfway Bridge is an asphalt parking area surrounded by trees.

1.5 The site is located in the small enclave of Halfway Bridge, to the north of the A272 in Lodsworth. Adjacent to the current application site, lies the adjoining Watermill, main building. This building was subject to an application earlier this year (Planning reference; SDNP/23/00588/FUL) for a Change of Use & conversion from Offices to Residential, to provide 1 No. 2-bedroom 3-storey dwelling.

Proposals

1.6 The proposals are for Proposed residential development of 4 No. 3 bed houses & 3 No. 2-bed houses with associated bin/bike storage & parking. This would involve the demolition of the flat element of the building and its replacement with new dwellings and gardens.

2.0 Planning Policy

Local Planning Policy

2.1 The site lies within the South Downs National Park; The South Downs Local Plan (*2014-2033*) includes the following relevant policy:

- Core Policy SD2: Ecosystem Services 1. Development proposals will be permitted where they have an overall positive impact on the ability of the natural environment to contribute goods and services. This will be achieved through the use of high quality design, and by delivering all opportunities to:

  a) Sustainably manage land and water environments;

  b) Protect and provide more, better and joined up natural habitats;

  c) Conserve water resources and improve water quality;

  d) Manage and mitigate the risk of flooding;

  e) Improve the National Park's resilience to, and mitigation of, climate change;

  f) Increase the ability to store carbon through new planting or other means;

  g) Conserve and enhance soils, use soils sustainably and protect the best and most versatile agricultural land;

  h) Support the sustainable production and use of food, forestry and raw materials;

  i) Reduce levels of pollution;

  j) Improve opportunities for peoples' health and wellbeing; and

  k) Provide opportunities for access to the natural and cultural resources which contribute to the special qualities.

- Development proposals must be supported by a statement that sets out how the development proposal impacts, both positively and negatively, on ecosystem services.

2.2 The South Downs National Park Ecosystem Services Technical Advice Note (non-householder) was released in 2018 and has been used to guide this assessment.

3.0 Baseline Ecosystems Services

3.1 The existing site's landscape and natural environment provides functions and benefits as denoted with an ✓ within Table No. 01 below.

Table No. 01 – Current Ecosystem Services of Landscape Elements											
Landscape Elements	Ecosystem Services										
	a) Sustainably manage land and water environments	*b) Protect and provide more, better and joined up natural habitats*	*c) Conserve water and improve water quality*	*d) Manage and mitigate the risk of flooding*	*e) Improve SDNP's resilience to, and mitigation of, climate change*	*f) Storage of carbon through new planting or other means*	*g) Conserve and enhance soils*	*h) Use / production of food, forestry and raw materials*	*i) Reduce levels of pollution*	*j) Peoples' health and wellbeing*	*k) Access to natural and cultural resources*
Commercial building providing employment in a rural area.											✓
Existing buildings within the rural area.	✓									✓	
Site adjacent a river.	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓		✓

4.0 Potential for Positive and Negative Impacts Upon Ecosystems Services

4.1 The only existing ecosystem services identified on the site itself were those of sustainably managing resources, aiding health and wellbeing and allowing access to natural and cultural resources. These all occur as the site is a commercial building (albeit one that no longer appears viable due to flood risk). Existing buildings should be re-used where possible to minimise the increase in material use and carbon emissions resulting from construction of new buildings. Such a building in this rural area would have provided employment to those living in the more rural area, and would have allowed such employees access to areas of natural space for the benefit of their health and wellbeing.

4.2 Given the building is in Flood Zone 3, its retention is not considered appropriate and would not benefit sustainable use of the land or management of the risk of flooding. The employment of the site would have been partly local but also likely those from further afield such as Chichester, Haslemere etc. The employees would have gained some enjoyment of the surroundings but as a commercial premises, this would likely have been limited to breaks. As such the site as it stands provides very limited ecosystems services.

4.3 Sustainable management of land and water would be improved by construction of new houses at a higher level, above likely flood levels. New gardens and planting would also benefit this. 80% of non-demolition waste & 90% of demolition waste by weight will be diverted from landfill, resulting in a sustainable management of the resources. Residential properties would allow more people to live in this rural area, and whilst it would not provide long-term employment itself, would employ contractors during works and would allow those working locally to live locally. Such residents would also be able to enjoy local natural assets. All current ecosystems services would therefore be enhanced by the proposals.

4.4 The site lies adjacent the River Rother and as such there is high potential for ecosystems services in this location related to water management, ecology and flood protection. These services are under utilised at present; the low level of the building makes sustainable management of water and flooding difficult and the high volumes of traffic it usually experiences would increase the potential for pollution. The large flat building with limited and overgrown planting does little to benefit wildlife. There is a low risk of further reducing ecosystems services through harm to wildlife and river pollution during construction, but also a great potential to enhance these services.

4.5 The following section details the potential for new or enhanced ecosystems services at the site.

5.0 Proposals To Enhance and Mitigate Impacts Upon Ecosystems Services

5.1 The proposals' potential to enhance or create new Ecosystems Services is detailed within Table No. 03 below.

Table No. 03 – Proposals' Potential for Enhancement of or Creation of Ecosystem Services			
Proposal	Impacts Upon Ecosystem Services	Ecosystem Service Criteria Impacted	Reference Document:
New dwellings in a rural area.	Allows for less transport and more local employment. Allows more engagement with nature.	Enhances A, J and K Creates services of E and I (through reduced travel)	Design and Access Statement
New dwellings above the flood risk zone.	More sustainable use of the site from a flood and water perspective; avoids the need for flood protection of the existing building.	Enhances A. Creates services of C, D	Design and Access Statement; Flood Risk Assessment
Construction materials will be traditional, characteristic and local where possible.	Use of local materials reduces carbon footprints. Characteristic materials would improve the landscape character here and improve visitors' enjoyment of the area.	Enhances A and J. Creates services of E, H and I	Design and Access Statement
New lighting in accordance with SDNP Dark Night Skies TAN and removal of existing floodlighting.	Existing floodlighting would cause disturbance for species such as bats. The proposals seek to not increase levels of glazing which would allow internal light to spill to surroundings, and would be replaced by specially-designed lighting under canopies to reduce lightspill.	Enhances B (through benefits to bats and other nocturnal wildlife). Creates services of I (by reducing light pollution).	Design and Access Statement
Replacement of commercial property with residential.	The change in use would result in a significant reduction in vehicle traffic and associated noise and vehicle pollution in the locality, benefitting local residents, visitors, wildlife and habitats.	Enhances A and J. Creates services of C, E, G, I.	Design and Access Statement
New well-sealed energy efficient dwellings	The proposal includes obtaining a 15% improvement over current Building regulations requirements for "U" values & low levels of air leakage, use of ASHP, rainwater harvesting, electric vehicle charging, low flow water appliances, low energy lighting and appliances.	Enhances A. Creates services of C, E, I	Design and Access Statement – Sustainability Assessment
New gardens near the river's edge. Addition of new native planting, bird and bat boxes, and insect features.	Gardens would aid in water management and would reduce the risk of any pollution reaching the river. New planting and features might benefit species such as birds and bats which use the river.	Enhances A and B. Creates services of C, D, E, F, G, I, K	Design and Access Statement

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 The proposal site offers good potential for ecosystems services, but at present these are heavily underutilised. The proposals present the opportunity to creately increase the sustainability of the site, provide access to nature and improve wellbeing of the potential residents, raise awareness of eco-friendly choices e.g. through electric charging points, and reduce carbon and other pollution emissions.

6.2 There are no significant risks to the existing ecosystems services and indeed these would likely be enhanced by proposals.

6.3 Once all impacts and measures are taken into account, the proposals would offer a significant net benefit to ecosystems services within the park and the wider National Park, and would therefore accord with the Policy SD2.