

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Impact Assessment

Thessaly, Roman Landing, West Wittering

Full Planning Application

March 2024

GENESIS
TOWN PLANNING

Application	Replacement dwelling and associated works (identical to planning permission WW/21/01250/FUL)
Site Address	Thessaly, Roman Landing, West Wittering PO20 8AL
GTP Ref	24015/AONBIA.01

Document Management

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1 PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy Framework

- 1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policy. As the site lies within the Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Paragraph 182 at Section 15 of the Framework is of relevance to this appraisal. It states:

“Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited, while development in their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

When considering applications for development within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

- a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;*
- b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and*
- c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.”*

- 1.2 Other relevant sections and paragraphs from the Framework pertaining to the landscape and visual aspects of the site are identified below:

- Paragraph 11 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development;
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places;
- Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment;
- Paragraph 180:
 - (a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes; and
 - (b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

- 1.3 The NPPG supports and informs the Framework and sets out further specific planning guidance. NPPG categories relevant to this development include 'Design' and 'Natural Environment'. Both the 'Design' and 'Natural Environment' categories advocate a character-based approach to the design and implementation of new development.

- 1.4 Paragraph 005 from the 'Design' section is of relevance to this appraisal. The 'National Design Guide' has also been referred to in the preparation of the proposals. The Design Guide illustrates how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice. It forms part of the Government's suite of planning practice guidance notes and should be read alongside the separate planning practice guidance on design process and tools.
- 1.5 The Design Guide highlights good practice in relation to identifying the local and wider context of the site and local character and identity. Specific consideration is given to the provision of a variety of open space and play, the inclusion of rich and varied biodiversity and high quality and green open spaces.

Local Policy

- 1.6 The site falls within the administrative district of Chichester (CDC). The 'Chichester Local Plan: Key Policies 2014-2029' was adopted on 14 July 2015. CDC is currently working on a review of the Local Plan (Chichester Local Plan 2021-2039: Proposed Submission). The review has reached Reg 19 Stage but is due to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate and is therefore still at an early stage in the adoption process.
- 1.7 Below is a list of adopted Local Plan policies relevant to the landscape and visual aspects of this application.
- 1.8 Chichester Local Plan: Key Policies 2014-2029:
- Policy 2: Development Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy;
 - Policy 43: Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
 - Policy 44: Development around the Coast;
 - Policy 48: Natural Environment.
- 1.9 The site falls within the Chichester Harbour AONB, therefore policies and planning principles within the Chichester Harbour Management Plan 2019-2024: Third Review (CHMP) (revised 29 January 2024) will be a material consideration in the determination of this application. The following policies/principles are considered to be of relevance to the landscape and visual aspects of this application:
- Policy 1: Conserving and Enhancing the Landscape;
 - Policy 2: Development Management; and
 - Planning Principle 03: Replacement Dwellings and Domestic Householder Extensions.
- 1.10 Reference has also been made to the 'Chichester Harbour AONB Joint Supplementary Planning Document', particularly Chapter 7: Design Guidelines, Chapter 11: Scale and Massing and Chapter 12: Guidance on Size Increase. Reference has also been made to the 'Design Guidelines for New Dwellings and Extensions; Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'.

Designations

- 1.11 The site is located within the nationally designated landscape of the Chichester Harbour AONB.

2 LANDSCAPE BASELINE

Landscape Character

National Scale

2.1 The site lies within National Character Area No 126: South Coast Plain. References to settlement pattern are limited to the following:

- The area has significant urban development, with settlements along the coastline dominated by the Portsmouth conurbation, suburban villages and seaside towns including Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and Worthing linked by major road and rail systems; (Key Characteristics – Page 6)
- Local vernacular and building materials: Building materials within the coastal margins traditionally reflect the proximity of the sea for importing raw materials, such as timber frames, thatch, flint and cob. Timber framing was widely used for houses until after the 17th century, after which brick was a more common option. The medieval churches around the harbours are made of flint and stone. Many of the villages have retained their medieval core and are often arranged round a market or green area. The varied vernacular architecture reflects strong ties with its region;
- The area has a high rate of change to urban, with most of the larger settlements showing evidence of extension of urban and fringe into peri-urban. However, extent of new development beyond the peri-urban is limited and so overall character has probably been maintained.

2.2 As the NCAs cover large geographical extents, the degree to which their descriptions are appropriate to a localised assessment can be limited. To determine the landscape character of the area, it is thus more appropriate to consider character assessments at a more local scale.

Regional/County Scale

2.3 The Landscape Character Assessment produced for West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) (unpublished, November 2003), placed the site in Area B1 'Chichester and Pagham Harbours and the Manhood Peninsula'. Based upon the LCA, the WSSCC 'Landscape Management Guidelines' placed the site in Area SC3: Chichester Harbour, the key characteristics of which are listed below (together with Area SC4: Pagham Harbour):

- Enclosed natural harbours of marine water, tidal mudflats and saltmarsh with small inlets and creeks;
- Contrast with the surrounding open agricultural land;
- Localised presence of woodland, for example, Old Park Wood, Bosham and Church Norton Wood;
- Noise of birds, waves and masts;
- Distinctive historic features include oyster beds, earthworks, old sea defences, quays, and boatyards;

- Rich range of habitats at the harbour edges including mudflats, saltmarsh, grazing marsh, reedbeds, sand dunes, shingle banks;
- Areas of unimproved grassland concentrated on their edges;
- Wind-shaped trees and scrub;
- Attractive harbourside settlements and early medieval flint churches such as at Bosham and Paghams; and
- Landscapes of great wildlife importance.

2.4 The Guidelines for WSCC's Areas SC3 and SC4 also provide the following guidance which is considered to be of relevance to this project:

- Change – Key Issues: Pressures for harbourside development, particularly the intensification of existing plots and introduction of suburban form, styles and materials;
- Change – Key Issues: Traffic generation resulting in erosion of rural lanes and loss of tranquillity;
- Landscape and Visual Sensitivities: Inappropriate harbourside development.
- Settlement character of the area as a whole is mixed, with both traditional harbourside settlements and villages contrasting with more recently developed holiday and residential estates;
- Landscape and Visual Sensitivities: Relationship of views between the harbours and surrounding hinterland; and
- Land Management Guidelines: Conserve and enhance harbourside wooded settings and avoid the introduction of suburban styles, forms and materials. Carry out a colour and design study for new and existing harbourside buildings.

2.5 The 'Chichester Harbour AONB Joint SPD' provides guidance on the size increase for replacement dwellings recommending that:

"there should be no more than a 50% increase above the original footprint, or a 25% increase above the existing 'silhouette' (on any elevation visible from the wider landscape)" (page 23).

The SPD goes on to state that:

"The acceptability of any increase in size (whether within the guideline limits or not) will be dependent on whether the site can accommodate the increase while still respecting local character by reflecting the surrounding pattern of development and spaces between buildings."

District Scale

2.6 The Chichester District Council 'Landscape Capacity Study' falls within the Manhood Peninsula (Zone 13).

'West Wittering lies southwest of Birdham, on flat, low lying ground towards the end of the Manhood peninsula. The B2179 which connects West Wittering to East Wittering to the southeast, runs through the village. Roman Landing is the western part of the settlement, with back gardens at its northwest corner adjacent to the foreshore of Chichester Channel. A stream

runs out through the centre of the settlement via an area of marsh to the south of Roman Landing, into Chichester Channel. West Strand, a line of ribbon housing development along the sea front, lies to the south of the character area. Large, open and semi-open arable fields lie to the south and east, between the West Wittering and East Wittering. There are a mixture of land uses elsewhere, including more enclosed, smaller paddocks and pasture to the north and a number of large caravan parks to the north and east of the village. Footpath and road access to West Wittering beach including The Spit and East Head, lead out from the south of West Wittering, either side of large open grass fields, the southern parts of which are seasonal used for car parking.'

2.7 The Roman Landing Coastal Plan falls within Landscape Character Area 109 with the following characteristics:

- Almost no boundary vegetation through the north and centre of the character area, but significant amount of tree cover to the south of the character area.
- Provides open aspect, consisting of grazing paddocks, to the south of the settlement setting, with a wooded backdrop to the south of the character area.
- Small scale fields surrounded by existing settlement on three sides and on the same low lying flat topography.
- Trees to the south of the character area have a minor contribution to the rurality of the surrounding landscape and help reduce views of Roman Landing from the south.
- No significant contribution to separation between different settlements.
- Within the AONB.
- Contains Conservation Area, a floodzone to the south and east, and provides the setting to Listed Buildings.
- Vegetation to the south of the character area contributes to the setting of the open coastal area and Chichester Harbour to the south and west. Eastern fields provide setting to 11th century, Grade I listed church.
- 11th century, Grade I listed church. Minor association with 14th century fishing port at Snow Hill.
- Remoteness significantly reduced by influence of settlement surrounding the character area on three sides. Although enclosure provide a small degree of tranquillity.

2.8 In summary, the Roman Landing Coastal Plain has a 'moderate' landscape sensitivity, 'Substantial' landscape value and 'Low' landscape capacity.

2.9 The West Wittering Village Design Statement Revised 2020 defines the site as within Area 2 (South West). The following points are relevant:

- Generally design and scale is eclectic within Area 2.
- The elevations of many properties are rendered brick or flint and painted in white or cream. There is also the use of exposed flint work, white UPVC Shiplap boarding and exposed timber and red/brown brick.

- Windows, though mainly UPVC, can be metal or timber, and are Georgian, leaded light or sash type.
- Roofing is generally finished with red/brown, or buff, clay tiles with the occasional slate roof.
- Front gardens are delineated in many different ways including hedging, panelled or rustic timber fencing, flint, stone and brick walls (all of differing heights) or a mixture of these. Back gardens are more private with timber panelled fencing utilised with a mixture of shrubs, trees and hedging, depending on the area. Some of the properties in Roman Landing have an open aspect, with low walls and dwarf shrubs; others are more private with higher hedges and shrubs.
- Roman Landing and Snowhill are located in Chichester Harbour AONB with properties either having views across farmland towards East Head and Chichester Harbour, or farm/equestrian land.

3 SITE CHARACTER AND FEATURES

- 3.1 Thessaly is a detached part two-storey house siting on a corner plot with access running outside the northern and eastern boundaries. There is also a small access road running along the southern boundary.
- 3.2 The plot is well screened by mature hedges, trees and shrubs planted along all boundaries. Along the eastern boundary there is a tall, thick and very dense hedge which allows only glimpses of Thessaly's roof. There are trees within the site which provide further screening.
- 3.3 Along the northern boundary the hedge consists of a series of mature trees and shrubs which also provide an effective visual screen.
- 3.4 Thessaly is a house of no architectural merit with ad hoc extensions, plain tiled and flat roofed areas, Bradstone type stone walling and painted render with a mix if metal and UPVC windows.
- 3.5 The demolition of the property would not result in the loss of a dwelling of architectural merit and the site is suitably screened to ensure any replacement dwelling of a similar scale would not have an impact on the Chichester Harbour AONB.

4 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 The proposed new dwelling has been designed in a traditional style in keeping with the Roman Landing Estate with low eaves, small scale, attractive roof forms and traditionally designed and detailed windows and doors. The proposed dwelling has a cohesive attractive design which is sympathetic to the Roman Landing vernacular.
- 4.2 The materials selected are high quality, traditional and typical of the Roman Landing style with Cedar tiles for the roof, painted brickwork walls and painted timber windows. These proposals will be a significant improvement on the existing house which has evolved over the years in a haphazard fashion and will therefore have a positive impact on the AONB.
- 4.3 The proposed scale of the new dwelling is commensurate with the neighbouring properties and the existing dwelling. The variety of roof forms gives the house a low-key appearance characteristic of the Roman Landing estate and would make a positive contribution to the distinctive quality of the estate.
- 4.4 The proposed dwelling will sit on a similar footprint to the existing dwelling and views from the west will remain virtually unchanged, although the loss of the existing garage on the western boundary would be a significant visual enhancement.
- 4.5 The proposed house has a better relationship with the street scene than the existing dwelling and relates in a similar manner to the street scene as its neighbours. The pedestrian access is proposed from a path from the road and the front of the house makes a positive contribution to its setting. The vehicular access is from the northern end of the site and is screened by planting along the boundary.
- 4.6 It is proposed to relocate the driveway entrance along the northern part of the site and to create a new pedestrian access leading directly to the front door. Apart from these new entrances, there are no proposals to make any significant changes to the existing landscaping along the boundaries.
- 4.7 The design, scale and proposed materials will ensure the proposed development makes a positive contribution to the AONB.