

Report to	<b>Planning Committee</b>
Date	<b>14 November 2024</b>
By	<b>Director of Planning (Interim)</b>
Local Authority	<b>East Hampshire District Council</b>
Application Number	<b>SDNP/23/05251/FUL</b>
Applicant	<b>Mr A Jaggs</b>
Application	<b>Demolition of the existing structures that comprise the disused care home and replacement with a new single dwelling and associated buildings and landscaping works.</b>
Address	<b>Westbury House, West Meon Road, East Meon, Hampshire, GU32 1HY</b>

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**Recommendation:**

- 1) That planning permission be granted, subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 9.2 of the report.**

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**Executive Summary**

The application site is located in between East and West Meon. It is occupied by a large vacant property called Westbury House and since its closure as a care home in 2016 it has fallen into disrepair and been subject to anti-social behaviour, theft and vandalism. Prior to this use it was a boarding school and was originally a dwelling which was largely re-built in 1904-1906 following a fire. English Heritage have previously determined not to list it, but it is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset.

Arguably more important than the House are its grounds. They have a rich history with a parkland setting originally designed by Charles Bridgeman in 1722, two listed ice houses, a scheduled monument of the ruins of a chapel and remnants of a medieval village. The House mainly serves as a centre piece or focal point within the site.

The proposals involve the demolition of Westbury House and building a large single dwelling in its place. It would be of a traditional style and is described in the application as a classical English Country House. Overall, it would be smaller than Westbury House and would not be any higher, however, it remains a large dwelling. It is considered that its siting, scale and design are acceptable and the new dwelling would serve as a new centrepiece for the site.

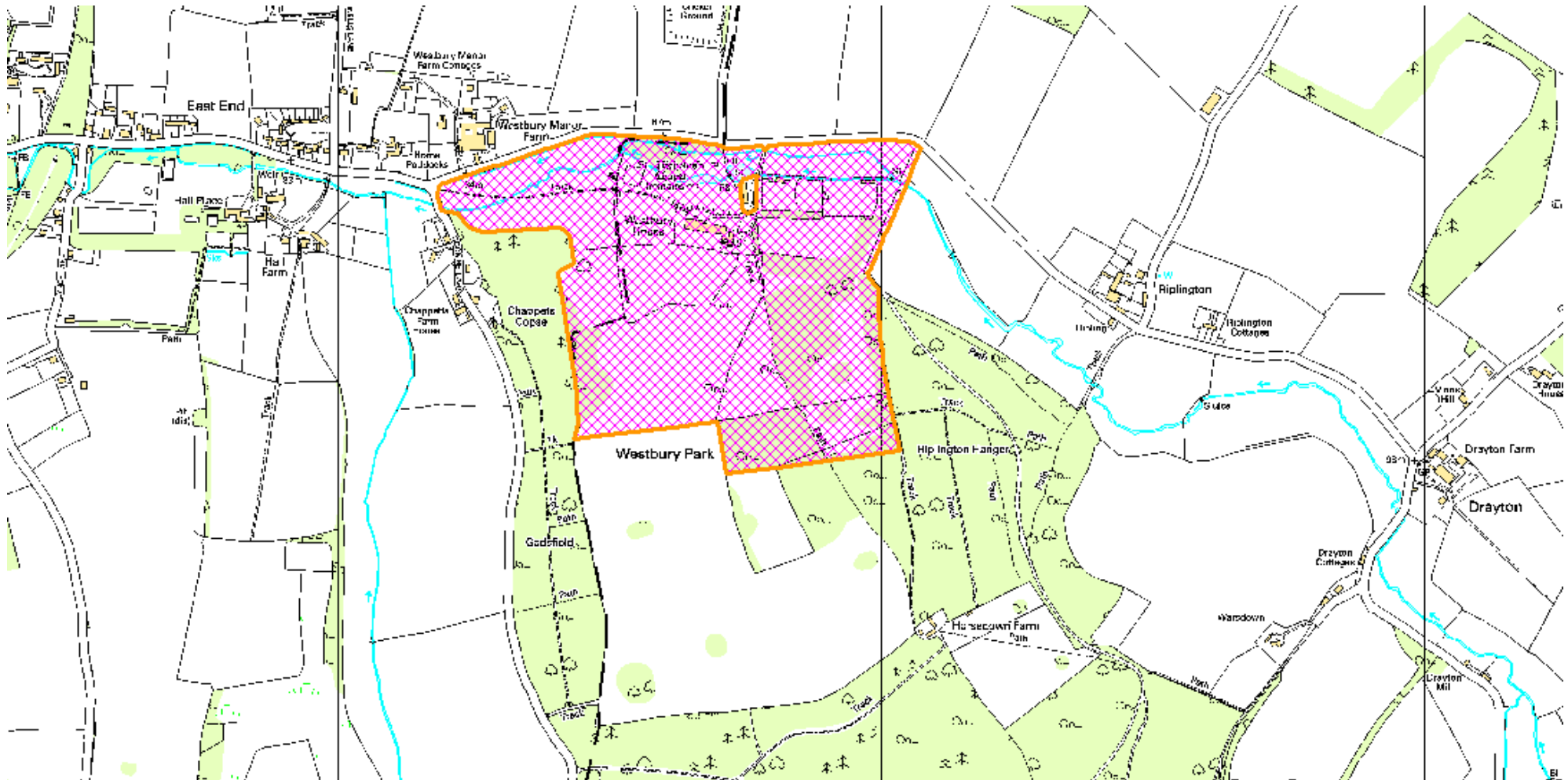
Some consultees raise concern about the loss of Westbury House in principle and whether the new dwelling is sufficiently rooted in its context. Officers consider that its demolition and the replacement dwelling are acceptable for the reasons outlined in the report.

In conjunction with the new dwelling, there would be parkland restoration including recreating some of the Bridgeman landscape, and associated biodiversity benefits. A proportionate level of works would also be secured to safeguard the ruins of the chapel, which is currently on the Heritage at Risk Register. Works to the listed ice houses would also be secured. These benefits overall, align with Purpose 1 regarding landscape, heritage, and ecological enhancements.

Many of the objections received raise concern with an additional detached lodge proposed in the north west area of the site. This has been removed from the proposals and the application description has been amended. Another consistent reason for objections is a new residential access at the north west corner and how this could have a suburbanising impact upon the rural character and appearance of Coombe Lane and area. Officers consider this access would be acceptable for reasons outlined in the report.

This application is before Members due to the scale and design of the proposals in a sensitive location and the planning considerations this raises, as well as the previous planning history.

Site Location Map



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## **I. Site Description**

- 1.1 Westbury House is a substantial building which was largely re-built in 1904-1906, following a fire. It originally was a private residence which became a boarding school (1924-77) and then a care home between 1982-2016. It is a non-designated heritage asset and previously Historic England have determined not to list it. Its condition has drastically deteriorated following vandalism and significant water ingress.
- 1.2 The House is situated at the northern part of its wider 35ha estate. The immediate surrounds of the house and parkland were designed by Charles Bridgeman in 1722, an 18<sup>th</sup> Century royal garden designer, and evidence of his work remains. The parkland is included within the Hampshire register of historic parks and gardens. The design includes a 'Ha-Ha' immediately south of the house and a larger Ha-Ha further into the parkland, which may also be one of the oldest examples in Hampshire. The wider parkland includes areas of grassland and woodland, with previously designed vistas to and from Westbury House. Much of the parkland south of the house is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC).
- 1.3 The site is accessed via West Meon Road, with the house set back from it at the end of a long drive. From the road there are some views into the site and of the House. There is also a public right of way which runs north- south through the site past the eastern side of the House. An existing field gate in the north west corner of the site would also be utilised by the proposals.
- 1.4 The River Meon runs east to west through the northern part of the site and past these historic assets and dwellings. It appears to have been diverted historically as it flows through two channels and a sluice pond next to the Scheduled Monument and dwellings. There is also a walled garden opposite these dwellings which is associated with the House which has the remnants of an apple orchard and nearby there are two listed icehouses which are in a poor condition. The woodlands immediately east and west of the Estate and the River Meon are also SINC.

## **2. Relevant planning history**

- 2.1 SDNP//18/00099/PRE: Change of use of 70 bed former care home to 9 residential apartments, partial demolition and reconstruction to form mews development of 18 cottages and lodge house comprising 2 cottages. Associated enhancements, landscaping and car parking. Pre-application advice provided on 05.04.2018.
- 2.2 SDNP//19/05026/FUL: Change of use of redundant care home and associated land to a residential use comprising 12 dwellings, access, parking, landscaping, repairs to heritage assets and associated works. Resolution to grant Planning Permission at planning committee 10.09.2020. Later withdrawn due to no progress on S106 completion.
- 2.3 SDNP//19/01050/PRE: Extension and subdivision of existing building to form 29 dwellings. Advice issued 01.07.2019.
- 2.4 SDNP//20/05875/PRE: Replacement of existing property with 10no. dwellings and associated access and landscape alterations. Advice issued 12.03.2021. Scope for a new dwelling on the site of Westbury House, concern raised about the other 9 properties in its grounds.
- 2.5 SDNP//22/01869/FUL: Demolition of the existing care home and replacement with new multigenerational family dwelling and associated ancillary accommodation and landscaping. Refused 03.02.2023 for the following reasons:
- Scale and design incongruous.
  - Size and layout not akin to a single dwelling (too much independence between different 'wings.')
  - Impact on setting of heritage assets.
  - Insufficient ecology surveys and lack of information on any subsequent mitigation and enhancements.

2.6 SDNP/23/02289/PRE: Demolition of existing buildings and replacement single dwelling and associated works. Advice issued 29.06.2023.

- Positive about a replacement dwelling in principle.
- Scope for either a traditional or contemporary design approach, rooted in its context.
- Proposals need to include a range of environmental conservation and enhancement measures (eg. landscape, heritage, ecology) for the site as a whole.

### **3. Proposal**

3.1 The application proposes the demolition of Westbury House and its ancillary buildings and structures and its replacement with a new dwelling. The new dwelling would be predominantly sited on the same footprint of Westbury House with a similar orientation of facing northwards, consistent with the original Charles Bridgeman plan.

3.2 The dwelling would be a classic 'English Country House' with influences drawn from various large estate homes. Its main footprint and form would be a rectangular 2-2.5 storey block with a lower arrangement of garaging and orangery with indoor pool. The garage block would have an access on its eastern side and have a character of traditional coach houses, with an enclosed courtyard. Overall, there would be less mass, bulk and height in many areas compared to Westbury House. Its roof would not be higher than Westbury House.

3.3 New landscaping works south of the House are proposed to re-create the Bridgeman layout, with a mix of lawns and mown walks between wildflower meadows.

3.4 The existing access with West Meon Road and past the adjacent listed coach houses would be retained, which would become a secondary route. A new track between the dwelling and the north-west corner of the site is proposed as a primary access. This would utilise the existing field access with further widening, cutting back of vegetation and new landscaping.

3.5 The listed ice houses and walled garden (the non-designated heritage asset) would be retained. No works are proposed to the Chapel Ruins or Medieval Village remnants (Scheduled Monument), however, there would be some works to the Chapel Ruins to safeguard them.

3.6 A new detached lodge was proposed in the northern-west corner of the site. Following feedback from the case officer and based on the representations received, this was removed from the application and amended plans were received.

#### Sustainability

3.7 Enhanced energy efficiency beyond Building Regulations and policy SD48 are proposed. There would be a 61% reduction in energy demand through a mix of fabric, a ground source heat pump, and a free standing solar array adjacent to the walled garden. Water efficiency measures would also be secured.

3.8 It is proposed to salvage as much joinery and stone dressings as possible from Westbury House, however, there is some uncertainty about the extent of this. Some surveying has taken place which has deemed that some stone detailing is beyond repair. Elements of the existing house are proposed to be retained on site to potentially create garden features, but no certain plans for this accompany the application.

#### Biodiversity net gain

3.9 The application predates mandatory biodiversity net gain. However, landscape enhancements involving the restoration of the Bridgeman landscape, restoration of the wider parkland through woodland management and clearance of some self-seeded trees and other new tree planting, enhancements for protected species are all proposed. This would accrue a variety of enhancements for nature and the parkland character on site.

Drainage

- 3.10 Foul water would be served by a new package treatment plant, which would replace the larger plant which served the care home use. New surface water drainage for the House is also proposed.

Dark night skies

- 3.11 Reduced lighting compared to the care home use is proposed. This is largely due to the loss of the staff/visitor car park on the eastern side of Westbury House. The specification of any new lighting is proposed to meet the Dark Skies Technical Advice Note.

**4. Consultations**

- 4.1 **Arboriculture:** No objection, subject to conditions.

- 4.2 **Archaeology:** No objection, subject to conditions.

- 4.3 **Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE):** Objection specifically regarding the originally proposed separate lodge, but otherwise supportive of the application.

- 4.4 **Conservation Officer:** Comments

- House is in poor condition and a non-designated heritage asset.
- Proposals more harmful/disruptive than the retention/repair/reuse of existing House.
- House provides a cubic content and footprint for a possible replacement.
- Further contextual evidence needed to justify the demolition of the House.
- Summary impact statement is required to assess options of retention and demolition.
- Structural survey showed majority of external walls are still solid but damage has occurred because of water ingress. No structural survey of outbuildings undertaken. Further information to assess, evidence, and justify the works is required.
- Need to evidence the scope of works/repairs needed to justify proposals.
- The Chapel Ruins are 'at risk' and works needed to remove it from the Register, which would be a benefit.
- Installation of solar panel array needs to be assessed for impact upon the walled garden including service connections and alternate options for solar PV and locations.

- 4.5 **Dark Night Skies:** No objection in principle, but insufficient evidence to make full assessment. Need to understand the current lighting provision and what will be improved to determine whether there would be an improvement. More detailed lighting plan required.

- 4.6 **Design:** Objection, as follows:

- The design evolution needs to follow the landscape-led approach to demonstrate an understanding of the site, wider context, and the specific country home precedents in the area.
- Traditionally inspired design is supported; but needs to be authentic and not a 'hybrid' approach as proposed which is neither traditional/modern; including appropriate detailing and materials.
- Must address the requirements of the Sustainable Construction SPD and maximise opportunities for multi-functional SUDs which create biodiversity and amenity value.
- Scale of the dwelling an issue and its CO2 emissions; should reduce these impacts in the design beyond what we would normally require for a normal-sized home.

- 4.7 **Drainage:** No objection, subject to conditions.

- 4.8 **East Meon Parish Council:** No objection to demolition/replacement of Westbury House. (Officer note: Objected to the separate lodge, now removed from the application).

- 4.9 **Ecology:** No objection, subject to conditions.
- 4.10 **Environment Agency:** No objection, subject to condition.
- 4.11 **Hampshire Gardens Trust:** Support the garden and landscape proposals.
- 4.12 **Highways Authority:** No objection, subject to conditions.
- 4.13 **Historic England:** No objection. Need to seek opportunities to safeguard the Chapel Ruins, given its poor condition.
- 4.14 **Landscape:** Objection, as follows:
- Overall
- Insufficient commitment and unclear goals regarding management and enhancement of the site as a whole.
  - Evidence does not clearly demonstrate that the design has been influenced/informed sufficiently to generate the very best scheme possible.
  - Cannot conclude the scheme is landscape-led.
- Ecology
- Would like to see spaces designed into the new buildings for bats. Could easily integrate space for nature, designed into buildings and structures.
  - The proposals do not include details concerning water voles. Presence of this species in the river may determine future site management.
- Landscape
- The application currently demonstrates a number of decisions that have been made which unnecessarily cause landscape harm.
  - Proposed earthworks fail to work with the existing landform.
  - Concern over visual impact of second vehicular access.
  - Concern about location of solar panels next to walled garden.
- Soils
- Soils excavated for the new dwelling would be spread onto valuable rough grassland habitat, within the river floodplain.
  - Cut/fill for the dwelling would potentially impede the connection the river has to its floodplain. Unable to see how soils can successfully be spread next to the river.
  - Positive ambition to retain material but unconvinced it can be successfully re-purposed.
  - Good bricks and stone-work being broken up into rubble is not sustainable.
- Trees:
- Suggested tree planting should be a positive response to local character; not achieved.
  - Proposals for the wider site yet to provide enhancements that respond to evidence.
- 4.15 **Lead Flood Authority:** No objection (no conditions recommended).
- 4.16 **Southern Water:** No objection.
- 4.17 **Victorian Society:** Objection to loss of Westbury House (loss of non-designated heritage asset) and harm to setting of other designated heritage assets. Restoration of the existing building preferred.
- 4.18 **West Meon Parish Council:** Support demolition/re-building of Westbury House. (Officer note: objected to the lodge which has been removed).

Parish Council wish to see:

- a traffic management plan ahead of building works;
- consideration of asbestos;
- safeguarding of the chapel ruins; and
- impact on the River Meon being considered further.

## 5. Representations

5.1 16 representations have been received. These comprise of 10 objections and 6 in support. They raise the following:

### Objections

- Officer note: consistent objections to the lodge, which has now been removed from the application.
- Dark night skies must be protected; impact from light pollution from Lodge.
- Coombe Lane entrance occupies a prominent position and proposals would harm the character of the area, including from private and public vantage points.
- Conflict with policies SD4, 5, 6, 8, 12, 13, 25 and not landscape-led.
- Case officer note: Some support in objections for a new country house, recognising it's a neglected site.

### Dwelling design

- Faux traditional design and more modern more appropriate.
- New dwelling pastiche and query why a modern design not considered.
- Concern works to access will exacerbate flood risk into West Meon.
- Object to the north-west access becoming the main entrance.

### Highways

- New access in north-west corner in principle unacceptable.
- Highway safety of north west Coombe Lane access; poor visibility.
- New access would clear vegetation to improve visibility.
- Existing north-west field gate is for agricultural access and floods.
- Character and nature of the existing farm gate and informal access would be lost, in favour of more formal suburban gates/access harmful to landscape character.
- New access track encroaches into agricultural field within the site and erode its character, impacting the historic context.

### Support

- House has been a blight on the countryside.
- Sympathetic design, in keeping with the area.
- Environmental improvements including flood risk supported.
- Installed security has improved existing situation of anti-social behaviour.
- Planned re-build supported and gives the site a future.
- Existing house beyond saving.
- New House will sit well in the landscape with a degree of elegance.
- Works to restore the walled garden, icehouses, chapel ruins and ponds commended.
- Landscape works will support biodiversity.



- Will bring historical, wildlife, environmental and natural features ‘back to life.’
- Works to the flood plain will also benefit West Meon’s flooding issues.
- New access would enhance privacy for neighbours, but some concern for highway safety.

5.2 **The Council for British Archaeology:** Objection.

- Westbury House is a non-designated heritage asset within a historic landscape.
- New dwelling of a similar scale and design to Westbury House; unclear why it is not being retained and refurbished (preferable option).
- Heritage significance of Westbury House would be lost.
- No apparent public benefits to weigh against its loss.
- Carbon cost of demolition and replacement is significantly higher than refurbishment and re-use; contrary to SDNPA Climate Action Plan.
- Require a heritage-led strategy to conserve the historic landscape and assets.
- Contrary to paragraphs 201, 203, 209 of the NPPF concerning heritage.
- Demolition and replacement should only be supported with clear justification.

**6. Planning Policy Context**

6.1 The Development Plan comprises the South Downs Local Plan (SDLP) (2019) and the adopted East Meon Neighbourhood Development Plan (EMNDP) 2016. The most pertinent policies are listed below. A longer list of relevant policies can be found in Appendix I.

Most relevant polices of the adopted SDLP (2019)

- SD4: Landscape character
- SD5: Design
- SD9: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- SD12: Historic Environment
- SD25: Development Strategy

6.2 Most relevant policies of the adopted EMNDP (2016)

- EM6: Design Policy (layout and form)
- EM7: Design Policy (materials and detailing)
- EM13: Surface Water Management

6.3 Relevant supplementary planning documents (SPD) and other guidance

- Design Guide SPD (2022)
- Sustainable Construction SPD (2020)
- Parking for Residential and Non-Residential Development SPD (2021)
- Ecosystems Services TAN
- Habitats Regulations Assessment TAN
- Dark Night Skies TAN

6.4 Most relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023

- Section 12: Achieving well designed and beautiful places.
- Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

- Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

6.5 Most relevant policies of the South Downs Management Plan (2020-2025)

- Policy 1 - Landscape
- Policy 9 - Heritage
- Policy 50 - Housing

**7. Planning Assessment**

Background and principle of development

7.1 Westbury House was largely re-built in 1904-1906 following a fire. The extent to which it replicated the very original house is unknown, however, its restoration, externally, involved various styles and design. Its most significant elements have been its interior with high quality joinery and decorative plaster work and its Edwardian rooms in the western part of the House. Over time the building has been adapted externally and internally to accommodate its former boarding school and care home uses, some of which detracts from its original character. Historic England have previously determined not to list it, citing that it is not 'architecturally distinguished' for its time. It is, nonetheless, considered to be a non-designated heritage asset.

7.2 It became vacant in 2016 and has since fallen into disrepair, following repeated unauthorised access, vandalism, theft, and antisocial behaviour. The roof became compromised with the loss of lead material and, consequently, water ingress has significantly compromised the building's internal fabric and many of its architectural features and joinery. Whilst its external walls appear to still be structurally sound (a structural survey has been submitted), much of the interior is arguably unrecoverable.

7.3 The House sits within a parkland setting. Its immediate grounds and wider parkland have a rich history and character, which includes a variety of designated and non-designated heritage assets. The grounds and these assets are more significant in heritage terms than the House itself, particularly the Charles Bridgeman designed landscape which is culturally important and to varying degrees is still evident on site. The House does, however, contribute to the parkland by being a centre piece, which is important to retain.

7.4 In the above respects, the site has a lot of potential for landscape, heritage, and ecological conservation and enhancement. The realisation of this would also achieve Purpose 1. A key concern, however, has been what is the most appropriate scheme to deliver these overall enhancements. The planning history outlines a range of previous proposals with the most recent being a single replacement dwelling which was refused primarily for landscape and design related reasons.

Loss of the existing building

7.5 The principle of a single dwelling was not raised as a reason for refusal in the last planning application and in subsequent pre-application advice with the new site owner.

7.6 It could, exceptionally, be acceptable under SD25(2)(d) as an appropriate re-use of a previously developed site. This is because Westbury House was originally re-built as a single large dwelling which formed a focal point within the historic grounds and, from a landscape and heritage aspect, this would be re-created by the proposals and be an appropriate approach to re-instate given the heritage of the site. Additionally, a single dwelling in principle could accord with SD1 and Purpose 1 in terms of conserving and enhancing the landscape and cultural heritage, provided such benefits are secured.

7.7 Concerns have, however, been raised by some consultees concerning the demolition of Westbury House and the justification for this given its non-designated heritage asset status. The submitted structural evaluation report concludes that the most economically viable solution would be its full demolition. This is from an engineering and cost perspective, rather than its heritage significance. Regarding its significance, Westbury House is/has:

- A replacement of the original fire damaged house.

- Unlisted and Historic England determined not to list it, or object to the current proposals.
- No particular unique features and has been adapted and altered over time.
- Not been designed by a prominent architect nor is it an exemplary example of its time.
- It does not exhibit a strong style of architecture- particularly the eastern wing which is somewhat unattractive and less characterful.
- Not been the residence of a culturally significant historic figure.
- Less culturally significant than the designated heritage assets and the Charles Bridgeman landscape.
- In a poor state of repair internally with many features compromised/lost (albeit the external walls appear sound).

7.8 The application proposals provide an opportunity to enhance the landscape and heritage of the site as a whole. This would be through parkland restoration, safeguarding and a degree of restoration of heritage assets, re-creation of the Bridgeman landscape and other environmental improvements such as works to the pond and supporting biodiversity. In these overarching respects, given the greater heritage significance of the grounds and its assets, the lesser significance of the House itself as summarised above, it is considered that there is reasoned justification in this case for the demolition of Westbury House. Furthermore, as considered below, the replacement dwelling is of an appropriate design to enhance the site.

7.9 In all of the above respects, it is considered that the relevant parts of the NPPF 2023 (paragraphs 200-209) concerning heritage impacts have been considered in the overall planning balance and it is considered that the heritage significance of the site and impacts from the proposals, alongside the enhancements overall in the planning balance are acceptable.

7.10 The loss of embodied carbon is another concern raised by consultees (albeit there is no development plan policy to explicitly control this). Certainly, this would be lost from its demolition. The applicant contends that the replacement house would, over time, compensate for this given its energy efficiency and consequent CO<sub>2</sub> reductions. It is proposed to achieve a 63% energy demand reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> compared to Building Regulations (albeit superseded Regs are cited) and reach a standard which exceeds the Local Plan requirements. This would be achieved through fabric and the use of solar PV and ground source heat pumps. It is, however, acknowledged that the re-use of materials from the House will be limited. Overall, these points add to the overall justification above for its demolition. It is also noteworthy that the Local Plan does not have an explicit policy concerning embodied carbon.

Design of the new dwelling and landscape considerations

7.11 Some consultee advice and representations raise concern about the scale and design of the new dwelling. A submitted comparative plan of the existing versus the proposed shows that overall the new dwelling would have a much reduced overall scale and massing and be no higher than Westbury House – and in many areas lower.

7.12 In these respects and given a reasonably large house is contextually appropriate so as to form a centre piece or focal point for the grounds, the overall scale of the dwelling is acceptable. Its siting is also largely on the footprint of Westbury House and is positioned and orientated to reasonably reflect the Charles Bridgeman plan which shows the siting of the original Westbury House. Its siting, scale and form would also not cause the replacement dwelling to be any more visually prominent within the landscape including from public vantage points.

7.13 The replacement dwelling would be a classical style property which would be of a scale, form, proportions, massing, and use of materials appropriate to this design approach. The submission sufficiently demonstrates that its design is informed by references to other large

houses and how it is rooted in this context. One example is Hinton Ampner in Hampshire, albeit the submission includes particular reference to Standard House for influences, which is in West Sussex. That said, an appropriate approach has been taken in terms of its architecture and context of the site. Its form would allow for the enhancement and revival of the surviving elements of the Bridgeman landscape and enhance the site.

7.14 It is also recognised that many of the objections relate to the separate lodge (now removed) and the north west access, as opposed to the new dwelling. Some responses raise concern about whether a more modern inspired dwelling would be more appropriate. It is considered that the site has scope for either a traditional or contemporary design approach which was communicated in pre-application advice. The traditionally inspired approach is acceptable in principle and the proposed design satisfactorily recreates a classical architecture appropriate for the site.

7.15 Overall, it is considered that policies SD4 and SD5 in particular are accorded with.

Sustainability of the new dwelling

7.16 The application contends that the re-use of materials from the main house would be limited. Decorative stone elements have been assessed (to what extent unknown) and are not proposed to be used in the new dwelling, instead would be retained for use as future decorative garden features and any secondary structures. Existing bricks may be issued in retained walls and boundary wall features. Other material would be used as hardcore for foundations for example.

7.17 Nonetheless, the energy efficiency of the new dwelling and use of renewables exceeds policy requirements. Therefore, policy SD48 is met and these measures are proposed to be secured via condition.

Landscape considerations

7.18 The Westbury Park landscape is of regional and national significance according to the Hampshire Gardens Trust, as it one of the few surviving works of Charles Bridgeman in the 18th Century. The Ha-Ha on site may be the first constructed in Hampshire as well. The Hampshire Gardens Trust outline that they are encouraged by this application which “acknowledges and respects’ the long history of the site and echoes elements of the Bridgeman design.

7.19 Consultee advice has raised concern about whether the design is landscape-led and in particular raises concern about re-profiling the site to accommodate the dwelling. The design considerations of the new dwelling are addressed above. Regarding levels, there is some significant earth movement and closer to the River Meon. There is no evidence to suggest this would be harmful and both ecology and the lead flood authority have not raised concerns. A condition requiring further consideration of levels is, however, recommended including impacts on water quality. Further conditions are recommended regarding a parkwide landscape scheme regarding its restoration and conservation, as well as good woodland management for example. In addition, a condition requiring a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan is recommended.

7.20 Consultee concern has also been raised about the long driveway from the north west access at Coombe Lane. This would traverse an otherwise undeveloped area of the site which has previously been used for grazing. Interestingly, the historic maps show a former track or route from the access to Westbury House and in this respect the new driveway would somewhat recreate this. Provided a suitable low key design can be achieved, secured via condition, this element of the scheme is acceptable.

7.21 The proposed Coombe Lane access is a consistent issue raised in objections regarding how this could impact upon the rural character and appearance of the area. The proposals involve vegetation clearance to accommodate a wider driveway and visibility splays. An element of this would, however, be replaced by new hedgerow either side of the access. New gates would be set back from the road in comparison to the existing field access.

7.22 There would be some impact upon the rural character and appearance insofar as a relatively low key field access would be widened, landscaped and surfaced to become a residential access. This change in character would, however, be satisfactorily mitigated by appropriate landscaping (details to be conditioned), and a gravelled surface would have a reasonably rural appearance. Requiring details of the proposed gates is recommended to be conditioned so as they are not overtly suburban and prominent in scale and appearance. It is also acknowledged that many large country houses have reasonably large gated entrances and long driveways leading to secluded properties.

7.23 In the above respects, the proposed dwelling and its access would be acceptable and accord with policies SD4 and SD5, subject to conditions.

Impact on heritage assets

7.24 Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states “in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses”.

7.25 The proposed dwelling would enhance the site compared to the existing building. It would create an acceptable relationship with the nearby coach houses which historically have been associated with Westbury House. Historic England have also not raised concern regarding the setting of the scheduled monuments. The setting of the listed icehouses within the grounds would also not be affected. As previously outlined, the proposals involve restoring elements of the Bridgeman Landscape and works to restore the wider historic registered parkland.

7.26 Overall, the proposals accord with policies SD12 and SD13 regarding the setting of The Chapel and remnants of the Medieval village, ice houses, coach houses and the registered parkland.

7.27 Considerations regarding the loss of Westbury House, as a non-designated heritage asset, is assessed above. It is considered that this harm is also outweighed by the overall benefits which accrue from the proposals.

7.28 Works to restore heritage assets as proportionately as possible are recommended to be secured via conditions. For example, sufficient works to the Chapel ruins to safeguard them and remove from the Heritage at Risk register, rather than its complete re-build.

Highways and access

7.29 There have been discussions with the Highways Authority concerning the new access onto Coombe Lane. This has resulted in amending the plans to show the required visibility and the ability for vehicles to safely use the new access. From a highway safety perspective, the Highways Authority are now satisfied with the proposed access. Considerations regarding its impact upon the rural landscape character have been addressed above.

Impact on neighbouring amenities

7.30 Given the siting and orientation of the new dwelling, there would not be any harmful overlooking or loss of privacy towards the immediate neighbouring properties in the converted coach houses. It would also be a lower key use in comparison with the former care home. The new driveway would also direct vehicular traffic away from these neighbouring properties, albeit this would be minimal traffic associated with a single house. The immediate neighbours also support the replacement dwelling.

Ecology

7.31 There have been ecology related discussions. Further survey work was undertaken over the summer in relation to bats. The ecologist no longer raises an objection. A condition securing mitigation and enhancement measures more widely is proposed.

Foul drainage and The Conservation of Habitats Regulations (2017) (as amended)

- 7.32 Natural England’s response highlights the need to assess whether there would be any impact upon the SPA/SAC designations within The Solent. The Solent is vulnerable to water quality issues and the River Meon flows through the site, which forms part of its catchment.
- 7.33 Under the Regulations the likely significant effects of the proposals upon European protected sites is required to be assessed. Compared to the site’s former care home use of c.70 beds the proposals would result in a much lower occupation of the site. The existing private septic tank would be replaced with an upgraded system. Given the lower occupancy of the site, any likely significant effect upon the Solent has been screened out for this reason and there is not a need to undertake an Appropriate Assessment where mitigation may be required. Therefore, the proposals satisfy these Regulations.

Surface water and flood risk

- 7.34 The Lead Flood Authority and district council drainage engineer raise no concerns. Local representations raise some concern about flood risk being exacerbated however there is no evidence of this potentially occurring. The area of the proposed access has, however, experienced flooding and the surface water drainage condition seeks to consider suitable drainage in this location as well as for the House.

Community Infrastructure Levy

- 7.35 The development would be CIL liable.

**8. Conclusion**

- 8.1 Overall, the scale and design of the proposals are acceptable having taken into account consultee responses, representations, and the landscape character and appearance of the area. The proposals would also preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the landscape and heritage of the site for the reasons outlined. The surrounding amenities of neighbouring dwellings are also protected.
- 8.2 The NPPF outlines overarching economic, social and environmental objectives to sustainable development. In these respects, the scheme would deliver environmental (eg. landscape) and social (cultural heritage) enhancements. There would also be some economic benefits through the demolition and construction phase.
- 8.3 The proposals substantially comply with both relevant individual policies and the Development Plan as a whole, the NPPF, National Park Purposes, and relevant legislation. There are no material considerations of sufficient weight which would justify refusing permission.
- 8.4 The application is, therefore, recommended for approval subject to the recommended planning conditions below.

**9. Reason for Recommendation and Conditions**

- 9.1 The recommendation is:
- 1) That planning permission be granted subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 9.2 of the report.
- 9.2 Subject to the following conditions:
1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.  
Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
  2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the plans listed below under the heading "Plans Referred to in Consideration of this Application".  
Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

Materials

3. No development shall commence above ground floor slab level until a schedule of materials and finishes and, where so required by the Local Planning Authority, samples of such materials and finishes to be used on the building hereby approved has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include, but not be limited to, the materials for walls, roofs, windows (including glazing, head, cill and window reveal details), doors, eaves, porches, and rainwater goods. Thereafter the development shall be carried out in full accordance with the approved schedule and samples.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to control the development in detail in the interests of the character and appearance of the area and the quality of the development.

Levels

4. Prior to the construction of the access between Coombe Lane and the dwelling, details of site levels in the form of longitudinal and latitudinal sections detailing the topographical information along its route, and surfacing materials, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall, thereafter, be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory development which responds to the characteristics of the site.

5. Notwithstanding the details provided, no development, other than the demolition of Westbury House and construction of the access road between Coombe Lane and the dwelling, shall commence until details of site levels and longitudinal and latitudinal sections detailing the topographical information through the siting of the approved dwelling and its surrounds have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These shall show how the development is proposed to be set onto the topography of the site, in comparison to existing levels, and how it relates to the River Meon so as to avoid negative impacts upon the River and its floodplain. The development shall thereafter be implemented in full accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory development which responds to the characteristics of the site.

Landscape

6. Prior to reaching ground floor slab level of the approved dwelling, a Scheme of Soft and Hard Landscape Works shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include:
  - a. Written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment);
  - b. Planting methods, tree pits & guying methods;
  - c. Schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate;
  - d. Planting proposals for the re-creation of the Charles Bridgeman landscape between the House and outer 'Ha-Ha';
  - e. Pond restoration works to enhance open water and marginal aquatic habitat/vegetation and river banks;
  - f. Restoration works within the walled garden;
  - g. Preservation and enhancement of the two 'Ha-Ha';
  - h. Restoration of the historic parkland;
  - i. Woodland management;

- j. Works to the walled garden and to restore the orchard;
- k. Details of all hard-surfaces, including paths, driveway and boundary treatments including the Coombe Lane access;
- l. Details of the siting, specifications and management of Sustainable Urban Drainage system to serve the dwelling and new access;
- m. A landscape schedule for a minimum period of 5 years including details of the arrangements for its implementation;
- n. A timetable for implementation of the soft and hard landscaping works.
- o. A landscape plan with services shown (to avoid conflict);
- p. Details of planting at the north west Coombe Lane access into the site, including surfacing;
- q. Details of the piers and gates at the north west Coombe Lane access.

The development shall, thereafter, be undertaken in accordance with the approved details

Reason: To achieve an appropriate landscaping scheme to integrate the development into the landscape and provide a setting for the new development.

#### Trees

- 7. The development shall proceed in full accordance with the measures detailed in the Arboricultural Implications Assessment and Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan (prepared by Eco Urban Arboricultural, dated 11.12.2023, ref: 231572- AIA).

Reason: To safeguard existing trees to be retained and for good arboricultural practice.

#### Ecology

- 8. The development shall be undertaken in full accordance with the Ecological Impact Assessment, prepared by Daniel Ahern Ecology (September 2024).

Reason: To conserve protected species and deliver suitable ecological mitigation and enhancements on site.

- 9. Prior to reaching ground floor slab level of the approved dwelling, a Landscape and Ecological Enhancement and Management Plan, detailing the management regime for the prescribed details in condition 6 shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall, thereafter, be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To deliver suitable ecological enhancements on site.

#### Drainage

- 10. Prior to the construction of the access road between Coombe Lane and the new dwelling, details of its surface water drainage shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall outline a sustainable means of managing surface water along its route, particularly in the north west area of the site liable to flooding, and including any surface water features as needed. The details shall also demonstrate that there would not be an impact on water quality of the River Meon. The development shall, thereafter, be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the development demonstrates a high level of sustainable performance to address surface water and flood risk as well as adaptation to predicted climate change.

- 11. Notwithstanding the details provided in relation to condition 10, no development above ground floor slab level, other than the demolition of Westbury House and the construction of the access between Coombe Lane and dwelling, shall commence until a



detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme, including a Management Plan detailing its future management and maintenance has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include sustainable urban drainage features relating to the dwelling and be consistent with condition 6 in relation to multifunctional at surface features. The details shall also demonstrate that there would not be an impact on water quality of the River Meon. The scheme shall thereafter be undertaken and maintained in full accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the development demonstrates a high level of sustainable performance to address mitigation of, and adaptation to, predicted climate change.

12. No development, other than the demolition of Westbury House and construction of the new access road between Coombe Lane and the new dwelling, shall commence until a detailed drainage scheme for the means of foul water disposal has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include drainage calculations and a Management and Maintenance Plan. The development shall be carried out in full accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory provision of foul water drainage.

Sustainable Construction

13. Prior to the commencement of development above ground floor slab level of the dwelling hereby permitted, detailed information in a Design Stage Sustainable Construction Report in the form of:

- a) Design Stage SAP 10 assessment.
- b) Design stage BRE water calculator.
- c) Design stage plan and product specification for electric vehicle charging points, ground source heat pump and solar PV, waste facilities, rainwater harvesting and materials; and
- d) Details of the scope to reclaim/salvage existing building materials and their re-use.

Demonstrating that the development will:

- a) Reduce predicted CO2 emissions by at least 63% due to energy efficiency measures for the fabric of the building and onsite renewable energy, compared with the maximum allowed by Part L1A 2021;
- b) Provide an EV charge point in a suitable location, with a minimum power rating output of 7kW and a universal socket;
- c) Have a predicted mains water consumption of no more than 110 litres per person per day;
- d) Have separate internal bin collection for recyclables matching local waste collection service;

shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be built in full accordance with these approved details.

Reason: To ensure the development demonstrates a high level of sustainable performance to address mitigation of, and adaptation to, predicted climate change.

Heritage

14. No development of the new access between Coombe Lane and the dwelling shall commence until details of an Archaeological Watching Brief, including its implementation, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Watching Brief shall outline a programme of monitoring of excavation works by a suitably qualified archaeologist. If archaeological deposits are found, the works shall cease and an evaluation shall be undertaken to ascertain its heritage significance and any subsequent avoidance, mitigation and remediation to be undertaken to preserve deposits. A written record of any archaeological assessment undertaken

shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority within 3 months of the completion of any archaeological investigation, unless an alternative timescale for submission of the report is agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the preservation of archaeology through a regime of monitoring and, if any deposits are discovered to ensure their preservation and conserve the heritage of the site.

15. No development shall commence beyond the base course of the access road between Coombe Lane and the dwelling until the implementation of a programme of archaeological evaluation and mitigation strategy for the siting of the dwelling and surrounding topographical changes to existing ground levels have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall, thereafter, be undertaken in full accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To assess and mitigate the extent, nature and date of any archaeological deposits that might be present and the impact of the development upon these heritage assets.

16. Following completion of the archaeological evaluation pursuant to condition 14, prior to reaching ground floor slab level of the new dwelling a report shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority which details the results and full accordance with the approved programme. The report shall set out any post excavation assessment, specialist analysis and conclusions as well as the deposition of the report into the public records.

Reason: To contribute to knowledge and understanding of the history of the site by ensuring that opportunities are taken to capture evidence from the historic environment and to make this publicly accessible.

17. Prior to the occupation of the approved dwelling, a scheme of works including timescale for the restoration and safeguarding of The Chapel Scheduled Monument, to an extent that it can be removed from the Heritage at Risk Register, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall, thereafter, be implemented in full accordance with the approved scheme of works.

Reason: To preserve the designated heritage asset.

18. Prior to the occupation of the approved dwelling, a scheme of works including timescale for the restoration and preservation of the listed ice houses shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall detail works that secure their long term conservation and enhancement to the extent, as a minimum, that they are not required to be included on the Heritage at Risk Register. The development shall thereafter be implemented in full accordance with the approved scheme of works.

Reason: To preserve these designated heritage assets.

#### Dark night skies

19. No development shall commence above ground floor slab level until an external lighting scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall specify the type and location of all external lighting to be installed throughout the site. All external lighting shall be restricted to down lighters that do not exceed 1000 lumens, which shall be designed and shielded to minimise upwards light spillage. The measures shall thereafter be implemented in full accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To conserve dark night skies.

#### Highways

20. Prior to the occupation of the dwelling, the vehicular accesses and car parking shall have been completed in full accordance with the approved plans and be retained thereafter.

Reason: To ensure adequate access and parking is provided.

21. The visibility splays for the Coombe Lane access, as detailed on approved Site Plan LA/14B, shall be provided and maintained thereafter.

Reason: To ensure safe access and egress from the new entrance.

Construction Environmental Management Plan

22. Prior to the construction of the new access road between Coombe Lane and the dwelling, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the approved CEMP shall be implemented in full accordance with the agreed details during the entire construction period. The CEMP shall provide:

- a. The anticipated number, frequency and types of vehicles used during construction and routing of vehicles;
- b. How deliveries would be managed in terms of vehicles entering and leaving the site and timings;
- c. The method of access and routing of vehicles during construction;
- d. The parking of vehicles by site operatives and visitors;
- e. The loading and unloading areas of plant, materials and waste;
- f. Measures to control surface water run-off and avoid pollutants entering the River Meon and ground water;
- g. Construction timings to avoid disturbance of protected species;
- h. Dust suppression, mitigation and avoidance measures;
- i. Noise reduction measures;
- j. Details of site monitoring and logging of results;
- k. Hours of operation during construction;
- l. The storage of plant and materials used in the construction of the development;
- m. The erection and maintenance of security hoarding;
- n. The provision of wheel washing facilities;
- o. A scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from construction works.
- p. Construction lighting and its operation.
- q. The arrangements for deliveries associated with all construction works;
- r. Methods and phasing of construction works;
- s. Access and egress for plant and machinery;
- t. Location of temporary site buildings, compounds, construction material, and plant storage areas.

Demolition and construction work shall only take place in full accordance with the approved CEMP.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety, the amenities of the area and managing the environmental considerations during the construction phase.

23. No development shall commence beyond the base course of the access road between Coombe Lane and the dwelling until a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for the demolition of Westbury House and the replacement building has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the approved CEMP shall be fully implemented and adhered to throughout the entire construction period. The CEMP shall provide details as appropriate, including:

- a. The anticipated number, frequency and types of vehicles used during construction and routing of vehicles;
- b. How deliveries would be managed in terms of vehicles entering and leaving the site and timings;
- c. The method of access and routing of vehicles during construction;
- d. The parking of vehicles by site operatives and visitors;
- e. The loading and unloading areas of plant, materials and waste;
- f. Measures to control surface water run-off and avoid pollutants entering the River Meon and ground water;
- g. Construction timings to avoid disturbance of protected species;
- h. Dust suppression, mitigation and avoidance measures;
- i. Noise reduction measures;
- j. Details of site monitoring and logging of results;
- k. Hours of operation during construction;
- l. The storage of plant and materials used in the construction of the development;
- m. The erection and maintenance of security hoarding;
- n. The provision of wheel washing facilities;
- o. A scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from construction works.
- p. Construction lighting and its operation.
- q. A programme of demolition;
- r. The arrangements for deliveries associated with all construction works;
- s. Methods and phasing of construction works;
- t. Access and egress for plant and machinery;
- u. Location of temporary site buildings, compounds, construction material, and plant storage areas.

Demolition and construction work shall only take place in full accordance with the approved CEMP.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety, the amenities of the area and managing the environmental considerations during the construction phase.

#### Contamination

24. The development hereby approved shall be undertaken in full accordance with the Refurbishment and Demolition Asbestos Survey (prepared by Southern Demolition Co. Ltd, dated 11.10.2023).

Reason: To ensure appropriate measures of remediating the presence of asbestos on site during demolition.

25. If, during development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then no further development (unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority) shall be carried out until a remediation strategy detailing how this contamination will be dealt with has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The remediation strategy shall be implemented as approved.

Reason: The above condition ensures that the development does not contribute to, and is not put at unacceptable risk from or adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of pollution from previously unidentified contamination sources at the development site.

**Mike Hughes**  
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Appendices: Appendix I- Legislation and policies  
SDNPA Consultees: Legal Services, Development Manager  
Background Documents: [SDNP/23/05251/FUL | Demolition of the existing structures that comprise the disused care home and replacement with a new single dwelling and associated buildings including a lodge with additional ancillary residential accommodation and associated landscaping works | Westbury House Nursing Home West Meon Road East Meon Petersfield Hampshire GU32 1HY](#)  
[South Downs Local Plan \(2014-33\)](#)  
[South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan](#)  
[SDNPA Supplementary Planning Documents and Technical Advice Notes](#)  
[East Meon Neighbourhood Plan - South Downs National Park Authority](#)

