# EIA Quality Mark Case Study

## Bexhill Enterprise Park North (BEPN)

### Key Issues

The scheme proposed a new business park on a greenfield site to the north of Bexhill, East Sussex. Identified in the Local Plan as ‘rolling and well wooded countryside fringe defined by a distinctive east-west ridge’ the site is bounded by Ancient Woodland to the south, one of several Ancient Woodland blocks in the area, as well as established woodland parcels. In this context, landscape impact and scheme landscape design were a key consideration in the emerging design. However, rather than pose an absolute constraint on development, this provided an opportunity to incorporate the features into the design. By utilising the “strategic landscape assets” that provided both a physical and visual buffer to the development, and combining with a well-integrated package of on-site landscape features, the design team was able to maximise developable area on a relatively small site. The landscape character of this area is particularly important but like many places it is under pressure from issues such as ‘creeping suburbanisation’. This case study describes the importance of considered design and seeing existing landscape assets as positive features for the design in order to deliver sustainable developments that meet both Local Plan, and developer requirements.

### Purpose of the project

The proposed Bexhill Enterprise Park North (BEPN) scheme is responding to an allocation within the Rother District Council Local Plan (2006). The objective of this is to provide new business floorspace (mostly light manufacturing and offices) falling within Class B2 under ‘Policy BX3’. Access to the site is provided via the North Bexhill Access Road (NBAR) which is currently under construction and benefits from wider links with the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road.

### Description of the project

The site covers an area of approximately 14.59 hectares comprising of 4 land parcels approximately 140m to the north of the town of Sidley, which itself lies to the north of Bexhill in East Sussex. The proposed Bexhill Enterprise Park North (BEPN) is intended to provide 38,000 square metres of employment floorspace comprising of a mix of B1 and B2, or solely B1 uses. An outline planning application was submitted with all matters reserved except for the floorspace and building heights. Detailed approval will be sought by way of reserved matters for landscape provision within the application site.
Lessons learnt
The quantum of development proposed on the site provided as challenge to the design team. The development required considerable car parking provision, which “ate into” the space available for landscape features. Discussions with the Local Authority led to an increase in the provision of amenity space and additional buffering along the boundaries. By combining these elements with the sustainable drainage (SuDS) features it was possible to further open up the space and also allow for a greater provision of badger foraging to be incorporated into the design. The final indicative masterplans present a balance between deliverable commercial space, drainage infrastructure, landscape/ecological provision and protection of Ancient Woodland and existing water features. Future landscaping proposals should incorporate buffers to new development to create green infrastructure/amenity and enhance biodiversity which is to consist of new native trees, shrub planting and Weald native origin grassland.

Lessons learnt continued
A key issue that the design team were keen to press with the Local Authority was the desire to avoid “double counting” of landscape features. The scheme design has complemented the existing landscape features to buffer and screen the development. As such the team argued that on-site landscaping need not be as extensive as perhaps first thought, given that the benefits of the existing features had been established in the submitted Environmental Statement.

When considering landscape features, best practice guidelines are indeed useful, but the real value and aspiration for the site comes from early, important pre-application meetings and discussions with the LPA, and the considered appraisal of existing strategic landscape assets. These factors combined provided a scheme that was able to maximise the developable area whilst not compromising landscape character, in accordance with local policy requirements.

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