Wealden District Council Response to the Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan Review- Regulation 16 Consultation

General Comments

We congratulate Hailsham Town Council (HTC) on their Regulation 16 Neighbourhood Plan (NP), with a focus on design, sustainable development, green and blue infrastructure and improving the town centre. It encourages compact, integrated development and supports the delivery of community facilities across the town.

Length

As stated at the Regulation 14 stage, the plan is long at some 169 pages (inclusive of front and back covers) compared to 90 pages in the adopted ('made') Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan (July 2021) and includes 34 policies and 13 projects. Examiners have previously commented on the length of neighbourhood plans within Wealden District. For example, the Examiner on the East Hoathly with Halland Neighbourhood Plan[1] stated that 'an obvious defect of the NP as submitted was that it did not accord with national planning guidance that NPs should be clear, concise and succinct' (see paragraph 75). Wealden District Council's (WDC) view is that the submitted Hailsham NP is significantly too long. This length would prejudice its qualities for being a focused, user-friendly document.

It is still considered that there is scope to combine/amalgamate some of the policies such as some of the Town Centre policies, as well as policy HaGI3: Diversifying and improving existing amenity green space, which could be amalgamated with policy HaCF6: Play and amenity space. The length of some of the supporting text could also be reduced in order to provide a more useable, succinct Plan. There is also some repetition between sections, such as:

- the 'safe and convenient travel choices for all' section and the 'Movement' section.
- the 'Policies and Projects' section and the 'What is in the Neighbourhood Plan' section.

In addition, at the Regulation 14 stage WDC questioned whether some of the policies on design (or parts of the policy with criteria setting out what development should be) such as policy HaTC2: Town centre design principles, policy HaTC6: Public Art, policy HaHD1: Housing design and character and policy HaTC4: Shopfront design and signage policies, be moved from the Plan to the Design Guide document. However, if the issues are already covered in the Draft Design Guide, does it need to be repeated in the Plan?

[1] Examiners Report – East Hoathly with Halland Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2039, April 2024

Deliverability

As stated at the Regulation 14 stage, whilst a NP can include aspirations, the place for these is in the projects which HTC can work on developing. The NP itself should focus on land use policies and on what can be delivered rather than being too aspirational. For example, policy HaTC5: Public realm, gateways and wayfinding, confirms that the proposed gateway locations are likely to be outside of any development site. Therefore, it is unclear how they would be funded or materialise in practice? It is also not clear whether discussions with landowners have taken place with such sites, nor how this would meet the planning obligations test set out in the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010[2] or are HTC suggesting the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) could be used for this? WDC can confirm that it is unlikely that the CIL retained by WDC would be used for this. In which case, would part 3 of this policy on gateways be better positioned as a project? Another example is policy HaM4: Community mobility hubs, which may also be better positioned as a project rather than a land use policy.

Legal Agreements and Validation Criteria

As stated at the Regulation 14 stage by WDC, the NP at times verges into areas that WDC will cover such as financial contributions that we would normally secure via a legal agreement (known as a planning obligation), including Policies HaCF4: Allotments and food growing and HaCF6: Play and amenity space. It is not appropriate for a NP to determine when a planning obligation is required or what contributions are required. Such requirements will be determined on a case-by case basis by WDC officers in relation to its statutory development plan and national planning policy. WDC decide what the Section 106 legal agreement will contain based on our local adopted policies and national planning guidance. It is for WDC to both agree and sign Section 106 legal agreements. A NP can support the provision of allotments but not require it; the wording needs to be less stringent in several areas of the NP on this issue.

In terms of validation criteria, it is not the role of planning policy to set these out either as part of the emerging Wealden Local Plan, or within this NP as they are set out by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) (i.e. WDC) through its validation checklist[3].

Conformity

As stated by WDC at the Regulation 14 stage, for each policy we would expect to see conformity references to show how the NP is in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan. As the Hailsham Review NP has been submitted prior to the new Local Plan being submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, then the Hailsham NP review will need to be in conformity with the strategic policies contained in the existing, adopted Local Plan (1998), Core Strategy (2013) and Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan (2016). The latest NPPF (August 2026) confirms under Annex A: Implementation,

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[2] As set out in Regulation 122(2) of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010.
[3] Wealden District Council - Validation Local List

paragraph 6 that Neighbourhood Plans that have been submitted to the local planning authority under Regulation 15, on or before, the date of publication of the NPPF (August 2026) should be prepared in accordance with the NPPF published in December 2024, which is the case for the Hailsham NP Review.

References to the Emerging Local Plan

As stated at the Regulation 14 stage, there are frequent references to the emerging Local Plan in the NP, which are quite detailed in places. The draft Wealden Local Plan (Regulation 18) that was published in March 2024[4] was only a draft version and will be subject to change as we move through our Local Plan process. Indeed, a NPPF was published in December 2024, and there has been a subsequent consultation on a draft 'Focused' Wealden Local Plan (February 2026)[5], so there will inevitably be changes to the format and content of our Plan that was published in both March 2024 and February 2026. The Council anticipates publishing its Proposed Submission Wealden Local Plan (Regulation 19) shortly.

Since the Regulation 14 consultation the references to the emerging plan are now clearly labelled as emerging and the policies are referred to as draft as we suggested. However, we still suggest that HTC use the evidence base underpinning the emerging Wealden Local Plan to support the policies, which is less likely to change (although there will be updates to some). It is still considered that the maps showing proposed allocations from the draft plans could be misleading. See comments below.

Paragraph	Comment
Figures 2, 20, 23 and 28	The proposed allocations in the draft Wealden Local Plan (March 2024 (pink) along with the proposed employment sites (orange) are not part of an adopted local plan, have not received planning permission, and are therefore subject to change. As highlighted in the general comments above, WDC have since published its 'Focused' Wealden Local Plan (Regulation 18) for consultation, and the proposed allocations may change again prior to the Regulation 19 Proposed Submission Wealden Local Plan publication. It is suggested that the proposed allocations in the draft Wealden Local Plan (2024) (pink) are removed from this map, along with the proposed employment sites (orange) and gypsy and traveller sites (purple).

Repetition of National and District Council Planning Policy

There is a tendency in some of the policies to repeat national and district planning policies rather than create locally specific policies. An example of this is policy HaGI 1: Biodiversity. This is not considered necessary and adds to the length of the document. We have suggested that the TC consider removing any duplication with

[4] Draft Wealden Local Plan (Regulation 18), March 2024
[5] Draft 'Focused' Wealden Local Plan (Regulation 18), February 2026

national or district planning policies when revising the document, so that the NP is succinct in line with previous comments.

Projects

As stated at the Regulation 14 stage, whilst we note that HTC have clearly distinguished the projects from the policies using different colours, some examiners on Neighbourhood Plans within Wealden District have suggested that these are listed in a separate section rather than in the main body of the plan. Given the number of policies in the NP, it is our view that this change would help with the legibility of the plan, providing clarity between both policies and projects to the reader.

By Policy/ Section

Introduction

Paragraph 1.1- This is the submission version of the NP, not the Regulation 14 version. The wording of this sentence needs to refer to the correct regulation.

Paragraph 1.10- The scale and location of growth is reflective of policies in the Wealden Local Plan, but this is based on national planning policy and specifically the 'standard method' calculation of housing need and the how much land can be delivered for development based upon the NPPF. We suggest that you add 'that are based on national planning policy' after Wealden District Local Plan.

Paragraph 1.24- We note this has now been altered to refer to the review. However, the terms used of minor and major modifications do not align with the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)[6] . We suggest the terminology in the first bullet point is changed and that in the brackets it is made clear that this is the view of the Town Council. It also needs to be clear that the referendum will only be held if considered necessary by the examiner.

Paragraph 1.25- This is the submission version of the Plan. We would suggest this paragraph is either amended or removed.

Vision and Objectives

The vision is usually written in the future tense as it is the vision for the future i.e. 2042. We would suggest that vision is written in the future tense.

Planning Policies

HaCF 1 Healthcare

No comment.

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[6] See paragraph 106 Reference ID: 41-106-20190509 of the PPG

HaCF 2 Education and Early Years

No comment.

HaCF 3 Community halls, centres and hubs

Wording of the Policy

The wording of part 3 is muddled. It states that:

'Where the loss of a community facility is proposed it is expected that a facility replacement is provided, equivalent to or better than exists currently
or where the need can be met by an existing facility within the Neighbourhood Plan Area or within reasonable distance of the community using that facility
and where evidence is provided that demonstrates that the current facility is no longer required or viable'.

With so many different strands to the policy, it is difficult to know which part applies. For example, is it stating that where the need can be met by an existing facility within the neighbourhood area or nearby, a new replacement facility is not required? However, it does not explicitly state this and is likely to be better suited to a criteria style policy The second part also does not define what a reasonable distance is or provide any clear interpretation of this.

The evidence necessary for part 3 will also be determined by the LPA and we believe this is better dealt with as part of a Local Plan. Draft policy INF7: Local Services and Community Facilities covers the retention of local services and community facilities and sets out the evidence needed to demonstrate if a building is no longer needed or viable. We realise that the wording of part 3 is very similar to the policy HCF1 in the Horam NP but it is subtly different. The Horam policy supports the loss of a community facility in certain circumstances including where evidence is provided that demonstrates that the current facility is no longer required or viable, whereas policy HaCF3 is requiring evidence to be provided.

In addition, the LPA would consider the provision of community facilities on a District wide basis, and this would need to be wider than just the NP area (i.e. Hellingly Parish may be able to provide a community facility that is suitable for residents in the north of Hailsham town for example).

Criteria 3 of this policy is not supported by WDC at this stage due to its confusing structure and duplication of our draft policy. It also attempts to set validation criteria which a NP cannot do.

Recommendation

Remove part 3 of the policy as it is better dealt with at the district level through the Local Plan.

HaCF 4 Allotments and food growing

Wording of the Policy

WDC will define when planning obligations/financial contributions are required, dependent on policies in its statutory development plan. This will also be dependent on viability evidence (that is not considered as part of the Hailsham NP) to justify such a requirement as required in paragraph 35 of the NPPF (December 2024). Part 1 of the policy is therefore not appropriate. The provision of allotments can be supported through this policy, but the NP cannot require this.

Recommendation

It is suggested that part 1 of policy HaCF4 is removed or that it is reframed to support the provision of allotments.

HaCF 5 Sports facilities and playing pitches

No comment.

HaCF 6 Play and amenity space

Wording of the Policy

It is for WDC to determine what play and amenity space is required on a case-by-case basis, based on its statutory development plan. The provision of play space can be supported within the Neighbourhood Plan Area, but the Hailsham NP cannot require this.

It is stated that 'proposals for new residential development (resulting in a net gain of new homes) should contribute towards the provision of accessible and inclusive natural & semi-natural green spaces, amenity green space and play space for children and young people'. This does not correspond with the emerging draft Policy INF8: Open space, Sports and Recreation Provisions in the draft Wealden Local Plan (March 2024), which requires open space and recreation provision on residential development of 10 or more dwellings (net). Even then, this draft Local Plan policy is subject to change at the Regulation 19 stage.

Recommendation

It is suggested that the opening paragraph of Part 1 of the policy is rephrased to support such provisions, or the opening paragraph could be largely removed and the policy left as criteria for when green spaces are proposed as part new residential development schemes.

PAS-01 Transforming existing residential streets into green streets

Wording of the Project

This is aspirational and unlikely to be achieved, particularly for existing streets. Does this need to be in the NP, given it is already in the Design Guide?

Recommendation

Remove the project from the NP.

HaCF 7 Burial Space

No comment.

HaCF 8 Community infrastructure delivery

Wording of the Policy

In practice, Part 2 of this policy would be for the developer to agree with the LPA through a planning obligation, and we are not sure this adds anything beyond what we would normally expect on these issues.

With regards to Part 3, it is for the LPA to determine what documents need to be submitted with a planning application as part of its validation criteria. Neither the emerging Local Plan, nor a Neighbourhood Plan should require documentation to be submitted by a developer as part of a planning application, and this should only be documented in the LPAs validation list.

Recommendation

It is suggested that Part 2 and Part 3 of this policy are removed or moved to supporting text.

HaTC 1 Town centre uses

Supporting Text

In paragraph 5.2 there is an issue with prematurity. The supporting text states that, 'The extent of the Town Centre (in draft form), as defined in the emerging Local Plan (and which is subject to change as this progresses to submission and examination), is illustrated in Figure 7'. Figure 7 also includes our draft Primary Shopping Area boundary. WDC are in the process of updating our emerging Wealden Local Plan and these new boundaries are to be included in the Regulation 19 Local Plan in late 2026 as per the current LDS. Whilst the text now clearly refers to the Town Centre boundary being draft, it is still not considered advisable to show a draft boundary that is subject to change in Figure 7.

Paragraph 5.8 talks to potential opportunities for the Town Centre which would be better located in the Design Guide.

Recommendation

Remove Figure 7 and instead refer in the text to the boundary as shown in the adopted Local Plan. That way if the boundary changes, the supporting text will not become out of date.

It is suggested that paragraph 5.8 is moved to the Design Guide.

Wording of the Policy

There are elements of this policy that just repeat national policy and the emerging Local Plan policy TC1. Repetition is not necessary and we are unsure whether this policy is indeed needed on this basis in its current form.

Reference to the Town Centre boundary from the emerging Local Plan is problematic, for the reasons as outlined above.

Recommendation

Remove repetition from the policy, specifically in relation to the NPPF and emerging Local Plan policy TC1. Instead of referring in the policy to the Town Centre boundary in Figure 7 (from the emerging Local Plan) it is suggested that reference is made to the adopted Local Plan.

HaTC 2 Town centre design principles

Supporting Text

Paragraphs 5.22-5.24- As WDC previously stated at the Regulation 14 stage, the sentence which states ‘This may include the retrofitting, refurbishment and upwards extension of buildings’, will be heavily constrained by the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the number of Listed Buildings. We note that a sentence has been added in on the wider context needing to be considered, but in our view, this should go further.

Recommendation

Along with paragraphs 5.22 and 5.24, changes within the designated conservation area or within its setting will need to be supported and justified by a more thorough heritage led strategy to preserving and enhancing the historic environment. Changes need to be informed by an understanding of spaces and how the town centre has developed and this should lead the identification of sites within the town centre for redevelopment and then to guidance on how these sites could provide a positive enhancement of the historic environment. Alterations to buildings within the Conservation Area will need to reflect a heritage led strategy. This needs to be reflected in the supporting text or within the policy itself.

Wording of the Policy

Part 1- Given the length of this NP, where these points are already in the Design Guidelines we question whether they need to be repeated in this policy.

Part 1c- We are not convinced 'balconies' are appropriate within the Conservation Areas and are not a common feature - if a feature at all - at present.

Part 1f- This is a land ownership issue rather than a planning issue per se. It could state that the Plan wishes to see town centre development take place comprehensively, which would be more positively worded, or to ensure that development opportunities are not lost through 'poor' design.

General- We also feel that there does not need to be a separate part 1 and part 2. As they are integrated, we consider there is a conflict between the two parts. There are a few conflicting elements to this policy which will be difficult to incorporate into a design that would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It is too prescriptive in our view.

Recommendation

It is suggested that reference to balconies is removed at criterion 1c.

We also recommend the removal of part 1f or rephrase this in line with WDC comments.

WDC believes that this policy should be shorter and more concise, with proposals required to reflect an appropriate scale, massing, design, articulation and floor to ceiling to street ratio based on immediately surrounding development. Part 1 should be used to reaffirm that proposals need to comply with the Design Guidelines rather than repeating the guidance.

Project TCM-01: Town Centre Concept Masterplan

No comment.

Project TCM-02: Place Branding Strategy

No comment.

HaTC 3: Safety by design

Wording of the Policy

Part 1 of the policy refers to having regard to 'the setting and character of the Conservation Area and other heritage assets'. We would question whether this policy, which relates to safety by design, needs to refer to the setting and character of the Conservation Area and other heritage assets. Draft policy HaTC2: Town Centre design principles 2c already refers to avoiding any adverse effects on the Conservation Area, other heritage assets or their settings.

Recommendation

Remove reference to heritage assets from part 1 of this policy.

HaTC 4 Shopfront design and signage

Wording of the Policy

This draft policy is long and repeats and on occasion conflicts with our own draft policy on shopfront design and signage as presented in the draft Wealden Local Plan (March 2024), which will be updated as part of the Regulation 19 process. It also repeats and on occasion conflicts with our design guide as existing (which is also being updated). There is a question as to whether this policy is needed in view of the emerging policy and design guidance.

Recommendation

To shorten and revise the policy to better conform with our own emerging policy and Design Guide. In addition, there are also listed buildings within the town centre which have shopfronts, so there will be other heritage issues s other than the Conservation Area.

Project SHS-01: Shopfront Improvements

No comment.

HaTC 5 Public realm, gateways and wayfinding

Wording of the Supporting Text

Paragraphs 5.45- 5.48 - The Council owns the South Road car park; Tesco's own their car park and there will be other owners along North Street. We question whether discussions taken place these owners and whether the installation of these gateways is realistic?

Recommendation

To remove text around Gateways if no firm action has taken place with landowners on these assets. It would also shorten the Plan.

Wording of the Policy

Part 1-PRG 01 is a project and should not be referred to in the policy.

It is suggested that Part 3 would work better as part of the following project, PRG-01. There needs to be some realism shown, particularly if landowners are unaware of these proposals.

Draft policy HaTC2: Town Centre design principles 2c already refers to avoiding any adverse impacts on the Conservation Area, other heritage assets or their settings.

Recommendation

Remove reference to PRG-01 in part 1 of the policy.

Move Part 3 of the policy to project PRG-01.

Remove part 5 of the policy.

Project PRG-01: Town Centre public realm improvements

Wording of the Project

Parts of this project read more as policy wording rather than a potential project. For example, ‘opportunities should be taken that contribute to the greening of the urban environment’ or ‘opportunities should be taken that improve the quality of the pedestrian experience’.

Recommendation

Rephrase those parts of the project that give directions as to what should be done.

This project will need to be informed by a heritage strategy as it progresses, to ensure that appropriate improvements are proposed - not just to the Conservation Area and its public realm, but how this may impact Listed Buildings too. There is much potential to declutter and improve the public realm and preserve and enhance heritage assets - significance and setting.

HaTC 6 Public art

Wording of Policy

This policy may be better positioned as design guidance rather than policy. Alternatively, it could be amalgamated into the previous policy, particularly if elements are removed as WDC suggest.

Whilst it is noted that you have adapted the wording of part 1f, following our comments at the Regulation 14 stage to state ‘where appropriate’, it is considered that it is still outside the remit of a neighbourhood plan to state that a management plan should accompany an application. This will most likely be determined by condition or a legal agreement that will be determined by the LPAS with the applicant on a case-by-case basis.

Recommendation

Consider amalgamating this policy with the previous policy or moving it to the Design Guide and Code.

Remove part 1f or move to supporting text.

HaTC 7 Roofscape

Wording of Policy

Parts 1a and b and Part 2- These proposals can be supported, but not required through the planning application process, given that no viability evidence is provided as part of the Hailsham NP.

Recommendation

Change the wording of parts 1 and 2 to support, rather than requiring them as parts of proposals.

HaTC 8 Town centre parking

Wording of Supporting Text

Paragraph 5.68-This paragraph states that 'Development of existing surface car parks to the rear of the High Street could help meet windfall housing targets for development in Hailsham, support provision of new town centre uses, and enable improvements to the quality of the centre and visitor experience, repairing the urban fabric of the town'. We do not feel that this sentence is required given that it is not linked directly to a policy and windfall development will be considered on a site-by-site basis on its own planning merits by the District Council.

Recommendation

Remove the final sentence of paragraph 5.68.

Wording of the Policy

Part 3a- It is not clear how the statement 'The proposal does not result in unnecessary traffic movement to, in and around the town centre' could be demonstrated by the applicant or what is meant by this.

Once part a is removed this policy largely relates to the design of a potential multi-storey car park. Consideration should be given to moving this to the Design Guide.

Recommendation

Remove part 3a of the policy.

Consider moving part 3 to the Design Guide.

HaHD 1 Housing design and character

Wording of the Policy

At Regulation 14, WDC commented that part 2 might be better positioned within the Design Guide. This would serve to shorten the policy and avoid duplication.

Recommendation

Move part 2 to the design guide.

Project DC-01: Architectural variety and innovation.

Wording of the Policy

It is not clear how this project will work. Will Hailsham Town Council approach developers directly regarding the first sentence? This project does not appear to be realistic. The second sentence does not seem to relate to a project as such and in fact the use of masterplans on sites over a certain size is something that we are considering as part of the emerging Local Plan design policies.

Recommendation

Remove this project from the NP.

HaHD 2 Well-integrated residential development

Wording of Supporting Text

6.15- The definition of windfall development in the glossary does not correspond with the NPPF (December 2024).

Recommendation

It is suggested that the definition of windfall development in the NPPF is used, namely 'Windfall sites: Sites not specifically identified in the development plan'.

Wording of the Policy

The first paragraph of part 5 sets out a strategic approach to site allocations, which the NP is not proposing. Therefore, site allocations are within the remit of emerging Wealden Local Plan.

A-E in Part 5 are in effect setting out validation criteria, which the Hailsham NP is unable to do. In the emerging Local Plan, we have a policy on both master planning and on ensuring comprehensive development. Part 5 is therefore duplication of an emerging planning policy and is being considered at the district level.

Recommendation

Remove part 5.

HaHD 3 Sustainable design and construction

Wording of Supporting Text

Paragraph 6.23 states 'It is anticipated that the Future Homes Standards will be implemented during 2025'.

Recommendation

Update paragraph 6.23 with the latest information on the Future Homes Standard.

Wording of the Policy.

With no viability evidence specific to Hailsham provided, much of this policy will come under scrutiny by prospective developers. Our own emerging Local Plan has been assessed using a whole plan viability assessment and tested through this process. However, even for us as the LPA, this has not been examined or agreed through the Local Plan process yet.

Part 1g-If the TC wishes to use this figure, an evidence base to support this is needed, which is not present currently. The figure in the government's EIP is a proposed action only. WDCs own draft Local Plan policy CC6 requires a target of 110 l/p/d based on enhanced Building Regulations standards at that time. The Government are currently reviewing these enhanced building regulations standards. This figure would need to be viability tested and even for our own Local Plan, this figure has not been tested through an examination process at this stage and could be subject to change.

Recommendation.

It is suggested that this policy is either removed or amended to just consider design and/or supporting developers that do take these actions.

This water efficiency standard in Part 1g should be removed from the policy in its entirety as this has not been tested in viability terms.

Project DR-01: Design Review

Wording of Supporting Text

6.35- WDC does not currently have a Design Review panel and are unlikely to do so in the foreseeable future.

Recommendation

It is recommended that this reference to Wealden District Council is removed.

Wording of Project

It is not clear how this project would be realised. WDC do not currently use a Design Review Panel. It is our decision whether to have a policy or process in place to use a panel and currently we do not.

Recommendation

It is suggested that this project is removed.

HaHD 4 Housing mix

Wording of the Supporting Text

6.42- Without figures, dates etc. the first sentence is of limited use given how many existing homes there are in Hailsham.

Recommendation

It is suggested that this sentence is amended to concentrate on using the evidence, as you have done further on.

Wording of the Policy

Part 1- seeks to prescribe a specific housing mix by requiring the majority of new homes to comprise 1, 2 and 3-bedroom dwellings. Whilst the supporting evidence may identify a need for smaller homes, there is no evidence that this requirement has been subject to viability or deliverability testing. Housing mix requirements should retain sufficient flexibility to respond to site-specific circumstances, market demand, viability considerations and changing housing needs over the plan period.

The policy should therefore be amended to support, rather than require, the housing mix identified in the Hailsham HNA and HNS, with all proposals considered on a case-by-case basis having regard to the latest available evidence. Alternatively, this criterion should be deleted.

Part 2 - seeks to prioritise the delivery of social rent and affordable rent homes. Whilst this reflects evidence of local housing need, the policy should retain sufficient flexibility to respond to site-specific circumstances, viability considerations, funding arrangements and the requirements of the strategic development plan. The policy should therefore be amended to support the prioritisation of social and affordable rent products where appropriate rather than requiring them in all circumstances.

Part 3- This part of the policy repeats our affordable housing policy in the emerging Local Plan.

Part 7- It is likely that many elements of part 7 will not require planning permission, so is this part of the policy required?

Recommendation

We recommend that part 1 and part 2 of the policy is amended to support rather than ‘should’ owing to evidence of viability and specifically paragraph 35 of the NPPF (December 2024). Alternatively, this criterion should be deleted.

We suggest Part 3 of the policy is removed.

We recommend the removal of part 7. However, in the event it’s retained we would suggest replacing ‘independently’ with ‘together’, thus not supporting independent dwellings in all situations, including in the countryside, which are generally not supported.

HaHD 5 Self and custom build homes

Wording of the policy

Part 1a and 2- It is not for the NP to set validation criteria for WDC.

Recommendation

It is suggested that part 1a is removed and the reference in part 2 to plot passports is removed.

HaHD 6 Street types, design and hierarchy

Wording of the Policy

Part 2 sets validation criteria, which a NP cannot do.

Recommendation

Remove 'and details of these should accompany planning application material' from Part 2.

HaHD 7 Parking in new residential development

Wording of the Policy

At the Regulation 14 stage, WDC queried whether this policy is required, given that ESCC set their own parking standards and are the local highway authority and WDC have a draft policy on parking provision in the emerging Local Plan. Part 2 could also be covered in the Design Guide.

Recommendation

We recommended the removal of this policy or at least moving part 2 to the Design Guide.

HaM 1 Active and healthy travel

No comment.

Project MHT-01: Crossing the A22

Wording of the Project

At Regulation 14, WDC stated that it is not clear here whether this project has been discussed with ESCC and whether it is feasible.

Recommendation

As no feasibility work has been carried out prior to this project being included in the NP and has not been subject to this consultation, we suggest that this is removed from the NP.

Project MHT-02: The Hailsham Country Line

Wording of the Project

At the Regulation 14 stage, WDC stated that it is not clear here whether this project has been discussed with ESCC and whether it is feasible.

The last sentence of the project states 'In addition to the project outlined above, proposals that seek to connect gaps in the walking, wheeling and cycling network across Hailsham will be supported' which is akin to policy wording rather than a project.

Recommendation

As no feasibility work has been carried out prior to this project being included in the NP and has not been subject to this consultation, we suggest that this is removed from the NP.

Move last sentence to a policy.

HaM 2 The Cuckoo Trail

No comment.

HaM 3 Public Transport

Wording of Supporting Text

Paragraph 7.25- 'In these circumstances new routes within residential developments should incorporate sustainable, safe, and effective infrastructure that supports bus use'. As the development is coming forward through the Local Plan is this not a consideration for the Local Plan itself alongside infrastructure providers such as East Sussex County Council who are working on its Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)[7]?

Recommendation

Consider removing the sentence in paragraph 7.25 regarding new bus routes as a matter for the local highway authority in consultation with the LPA.

Wording of Policy

Part 2- See the Examiner's comments on the Horam NP[8]. He moved the detail of the distances to bus stops to the supporting text as he did not consider it to be a land use policy.

Recommendation

[7] East Sussex County Council Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)
[8] Horam Neighbourhood Development Plan 2023-2040, Examiners Report, July 2024

Move the detail of the distances to the bus stops to the supporting text as per the adopted Horam NP.

Project PT-01: Bus Service Improvements

No comment.

HaM 4 Community mobility hubs

Wording of the Policy

Figure 21- some of the potential mobility hub locations are outside the Neighbourhood Area within Hellingly Parish and therefore outside the remit of the Neighbourhood Plan which is bounded by the parish boundary. At the Regulation 14 stage, WDC suggested that these are removed, particularly those potential hubs that fall outside of the Neighbourhood Area. Whilst Figure 21 has now been clearly labelled and differentiates between those in the parish and those in Hellingly we still do not agree that the NP should show sites in an adjoining parish.

In addition, at the Regulation 14 stage, we questioned whether this would be better suited as a project rather than a policy? It would be unlikely that anyone other than the Town Council or the County Council would be proposing to develop these hubs.

Recommendation

Remove those potential hubs that fall outside of the Neighbourhood Area from Figure 21.

Change this policy to a project and move part 2 to the Design Guide and Code.

HaM 5 Electric vehicle charging points

Wording of Supporting Text

Paragraph 7.45- the word draft has been added in before Policy HAIL AQ1 of the made neighbourhood plan. However, the policy is not draft.

Paragraphs 7.49- 7.53- This section on street maintenance deals with non-land use issues.

Recommendation

Remove the word ‘draft’ from the start of 7.45.

It is suggested for the sake of brevity, that the section on street maintenance is removed.

HaGI 1 Biodiversity

Wording of the Supporting Text

Paragraph 8.7 states that ‘Exemptions include, but not limited to, householder applications, and self or custom build schemes of less than ten homes and on a site no larger than 0.5 hectares’. This will need to be amended as whilst householder applications are still exempt, self and custom build are not. The exemptions to BNG[9] have recently changed in August 2026 also.

Paragraph 8.14 states ‘Opportunities for off-site biodiversity net gain may potentially present themselves through the diversification and remodelling of existing streets and spaces, introducing green infrastructure into these (see, for example, Projects PAS-01, PRG-01 and SGI-01), and through the diversification of existing green spaces which are currently little more than areas of mown grass (see, for example, Figure 27)’. Introducing green infrastructure into existing streets as outlined in paragraph 8.14 is more related to general ecological enhancement than providing off site BNG compensation, which would involve legal agreements on land or registering the site as a habitat bank.

Recommendation

Remove reference to self and custom build from paragraph 8.7 and update as per the national government guidance produced in August 2026.

It is suggested paragraph 8.14 is reframed as offsite BNG may not be applicable on streets[10].

Wording of the Policy

The first sentence of Part 1 of the policy is not required where it states ‘Other than where exempt by national guidance, proposals for development must secure a minimum biodiversity net gain of 10% (or greater, subject to minimum requirements established through the emerging Local Plan)’. This is set out in national legislation.

Part 1b states ‘within the Neighbourhood Plan Area’ This does not comply with the legislation, in particular the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, which specifies LPAs and National Character Areas and does not consider the parish level.

Part 1c- The process is already set out in legislation. Also, it refers to delivery in the Plan Area which goes beyond what the legislation states. It is also not clear if this refers to statutory credits or habitat bank units?

Part 5- Can some or all of this be moved to the Design Guide?

Recommendation

Remove first sentence of part 1 and restructure the policy.

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[9] Biodiversity net gain: exempt developments
[10] Make off-site biodiversity gains as a developer

1b- ‘Where possible’ could be added at the end of the sentence to allow more flexibility.

It is suggested that part 1c is removed.

It is suggested that part 5 is moved to the Design Guide.

HaGI 2 Access to green and blue infrastructure

No comment.

SG1-01: Street Greening

No comment.

HaGI 3 Diversifying and improving existing amenity green space

Wording of Policy

There is some duplication between this policy and HaCF6: Play and amenity space.

Recommendation

It is suggested that the two policies HaGI 3 and HaCF6 are combined.

HaGI 4 The Pevensey Levels

No comment.

Project PL-01: Interpretation Boards

No comment.

HaGI 5 Flood Risk and Sustainable drainage

Wording of the Policy

Part 1- ‘the design of should be’. This currently does not make sense as worded.

Part 1 is largely about the design of SuDs and water tanks.

Recommendation

Adjust the wording of the first sentence so that it is clear.

It is suggested that Part 1 is moved to the Design Guide.

HaGI 6 Paving of front gardens

No comment.

Project FG-01: Reinstating front gardens.

No comment.

Next Steps

This section at paragraph 9.8 still refers to this as a draft version of the Plan. This whole section needs to be updated.

Supporting Documents

Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan Ideas: Community Mobility Hubs.

The concept plan shows potential hubs in parishes outside the Neighbourhood Area. As with our comments on the corresponding policy and map in the Main Plan, we suggest amendments here to so that the document and concept plan must only consider potential works within the Neighbourhood Area.

Hailsham Town Centre: Concept Masterplan.

We suggest this document is removed from the NP. It is confusing for residents as it relates to works that are not proposed as part of this Neighbourhood Plan. Figure 1 also includes a town centre boundary from the draft Local Plan which is subject to change.

Town Centre Analysis and Ideas

Again, this document contains proposals for the Town Centre which are not being brought forward as part of this Hailsham NP, such as a multi storey car park. It is suggested that this document is restricted to analysis and case studies rather than ideas that are not going to be brought forward as part of the Hailsham NP.

Town Wide Analysis and Ideas.

It is suggested that this document is restricted to analysis and case studies rather than ideas which are not being brought forward as part of the Hailsham NP. Any maps should not show draft site allocations from the emerging Local Plan which are still subject to change.