

Land to the south of the A271 and east of the A22, Lower Horsebridge, Hailsham

WDC Application ref. WD/2022/322/MAO
Appeal reference APP/C1435/W/23/3335625

ASSESSMENT OF THE BENEFITS / DISBENEFITS OF THE APPEAL PROPOSALS, AND THE WEIGHT GIVEN TO EACH
Comparison of the Planning Proofs of Evidence of Claire Turner of WDC and Andrew Elliott of tor&co for the Appellant

Topic	Position set out in Proof of Evidence of Claire Turner for Wealden DC	Position set out in Proof of Evidence of Andrew Elliott of tor&co, for the Appellant
Benefits		
Provision of Market and Affordable Housing	The Council recognises that the provision of housing in all forms can be a benefit which is capable of being given very substantial or very significant weight under normal circumstances, particularly in the context of the Council’s housing land supply deficit for both market and affordable homes. The Council’s Housing Service’s consultation response indicates that whilst there is overwhelming need for smaller properties, evidenced by the need on the housing register across the district, there is still a need for larger family homes. The preference for two bed units to be in the form of houses is a constant theme in the Housing Service consultation responses on major developments. This is an issue for ease of letting and also relates to the suitability of flatted accommodated “as two bed units will have children”. Having regard to the above, and the three significant apartment blocks which from the Illustrative layout indicates around 70 flats out of the 124 units, WDC does not consider that the resulting mix will reflect the local housing needs and has reduced the benefits from the provision of market and affordable housing from Very Substantial to Substantial (notwithstanding the assumption that 35% affordable housing is delivered). WDC does not comment on the benefit of self-build or custom build homes provision.	Provision of up to 124 homes to accommodate local requirements, with a mix of size and type, including affordable housing (for which there is clear evidence of very substantial need and demand) and other forms of housing in local demand, including family homes, units for small households and self-build / custom build home plots. Very Substantial Weight

The Economic Benefits from the Construction of the Scheme	During construction there are the opportunities for employment, but WDC states that these are only temporary and there is no guarantee that these jobs will be available to the local communities. Limited Weight is afforded by WDC to this benefit.	This benefit is identified by the Appellant, including sustaining and creating employment at various skill levels and the benefits on the wider construction industry supply chain. The weight afforded to this benefit is <u>not separated out from the Very Substantial Weight given to the overall benefit of providing housing.</u>
Ongoing Multiplier Effects on Spending of New Residents in/at Local Businesses and Facilities	Limited Weight is afforded by WDC to this benefit.	This benefit is identified by the Appellant. The Appellant also identifies the benefits of ensuring that a resident workforce is available to support the economic growth of Hailsham and Wealden District, including job creation and supporting existing jobs on and off site. The weight afforded to these benefits is <u>not separated out from the Very Substantial Weight given to the overall benefit of providing housing.</u>
Provision of a Substantial Area of Open Space, Providing Public Access	No Weight is given to this benefit by WDC as it is directly related to the development and serves the specific needs of the development. With regard to the public access to the proposed play area and on-site open space, this would be welcomed anywhere and must be balanced against the loss of greenfield land in the countryside, furthermore any perceived benefit would be outweighed by the negative impact experienced by users of the PROW. Having regard to the location of much of the open space for recreation in Flood Zones 2 and 3, the usability of the land is restricted when inaccessible due to flooding.	Substantial Weight given by the Appellant to the benefit of landscape planting and management to provide a new multifunctional open space to improve on-site habitat, deliver biodiversity net gain and enhance public access to nature.
Landscape Enhancements	Details of landscaping are matters reserved for future consideration. Wider landscape harm of development proposals is noted. No weight is given by WDC to this.	This benefit is identified by the Appellant. The weight to be afforded to it is <u>not separated out from the Substantial Weight given by the Appellant to the benefit of providing a substantial area of multifunctional open space.</u>

Ecology and Net Gain in Biodiversity	WDC considers that the proposed BNG report concludes that the level of gain is not definitive and whilst indicated in the BNG report as being practical and achievable, this would be needed to be secured through either condition or legal agreement. Limited weight is given by WDC to the net gain in biodiversity which will be dependent on the amount of BNG that is delivered. To ensure such biodiversity enhancements are delivered, WDC states that appropriate condition(s) would need to be attached to any consent along with a condition for ongoing management and maintenance of ecological features.	This benefit is identified by the Appellant. The weight to be afforded to it is <u>not separated out from the Substantial Weight given by the Appellant to the benefit of providing a substantial area of multifunctional open space.</u>
Access and Connectivity	No comment from WDC.	Substantial weight is given by the Appellant to the benefit of improving the experience for people moving along the A271 corridor / site frontage on foot, by cycle and by bus (including future users of the Sports Hub) by reason of the various non-car accessibility improvements proposed. The Appellant also notes the benefits of the new occupiers of the residential development contributing towards providing a critical mass of users along the bus route to help support/sustain the services.
Disbenefits		
'Spatial Harm'	Very Substantial Weight is given by WDC to 'Spatial harm' by reference to the application of local policies on development outside development boundaries, settlement hierarchy, change to openness and agricultural character, the setting of Lower Horsebridge village, and the loss of separation of settlements.	The Appellant does not identify 'Spatial harm' as being a disbenefit. A response is separately provided by the Appellant in respect of the Location of the Proposed Development and the compliance of the proposals with national and local policy.
Design, Quality of Place and the Capacity of the Site to Accommodate the Proposed Quantum of Development	Very Substantial Weight is afforded by WDC to a combined adverse impact of the quantum of development together with scale and layout of proposals as shown on the illustrative layout, and the impact of this on the quality and attractiveness of the living environment for future occupiers. WDC's opinion is that the appeal proposals are overdevelopment.	The Appellant applies Neutral – Nil Weight (either as a benefit or disbenefit). The Appellant identifies that the detailed layout, scale, landscaping and appearance of the development is to be resolved at reserved matters stage. The Appellant proposes that a masterplan / design code is prepared to guide this.

Effect on Landscape Character and Appearance	Permanent harm/adverse effect arising from the development in landscape and visual terms is given Very Substantial Weight. The change from a predominantly rural character to an urban environment would fundamentally change the character of the area. The proposed development would not be perceived as a logical extension to an existing built-up area. WDC considers that there is harm to a valued landscape.	Moderate Weight is afforded to the loss of an agricultural field at the urban fringe of Hailsham to a combination of built development and amenity open space / natural greenspace provision and the level of change to the character and appearance of the landscape / townscape in the immediate local area – including the appearance of the site from local viewpoints.
Impact on Setting of Listed Buildings	Very Substantial Weight is afforded to the harmful impact of the appeal proposal on the two designated heritage assets. Even where the heritage harm falls in the “less than substantial” category, as is the case here, this still requires being given considerable weight and importance in the planning balance. The public benefits of the appeal proposal, when weighed against the less than substantial harm to the designated heritage assets, do not outweigh the resultant harm.	Moderate Weight is given to the adverse impact of development within the setting of listed buildings, noting that the NPPF requires ‘great weight’ to be given to the conservation of heritage assets and it is common ground with the Council that there is less than substantial harm to the significance of the Brook House listed building. The public benefits of the appeal proposal, when weighed against the less than substantial harm to the designated heritage assets (Brook House impact at the lower end of less than substantial harm), outweigh the resultant harm.

The Scale Used to Assess the Weight Given to Benefits and Disbenefits

Andrew Elliott states at paragraph 6.23 of his evidence that in assessing the benefits and adverse impacts of the appeal proposals he has used a ‘five point scale’ as follows:

- Very Substantial Weight
- Substantial Weight
- Moderate (medium) Weight
- Limited Weight, and
- No (nil) Weight.

Claire Turner similarly clarifies at paragraph 7.6 of her evidence that she is using the same categories for weighting the extent of benefit or harm: ‘Very Substantial’, ‘Substantial’, ‘Moderate’, ‘Limited and ‘Nil’.