

# Herstmonceux Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2017- 2027

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## Submission Version

A Report to Wealden District Council on the Examination of the  
Herstmonceux Parish Neighbourhood Plan

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## Introduction

Neighbourhood planning is a process, introduced by the Localism Act 2011, which allows local communities to create the policies which will shape the places where they live and work. The Neighbourhood Plan provides the community with the opportunity to allocate land for particular purposes and to prepare the policies which will be used in the determination of planning applications in their area. Once a neighbourhood plan is made, it will form part of the statutory development plan alongside Wealden District Council's Core Strategy Local Plan, adopted February 2013, the 1998 Wealden Local Plan (saved policies) and the Wealden Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan, adopted May 2016. Decision makers are required to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The neighbourhood plan making process has been led by Herstmonceux Parish Council. A Herstmonceux Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was appointed to undertake the plan's preparation. Herstmonceux Parish Council is a "qualifying body" under the Neighbourhood Planning legislation.

This report is the outcome of my examination of the Submission Version of the Herstmonceux Parish Neighbourhood Plan. My report will make recommendations based on my findings on whether the Plan should go forward to a referendum. If the plan then receives the support of over 50% of those voting at the referendum, the Plan will be "made" by Wealden District Council, the local planning authority (LPA) for the neighbourhood plan area.

## The Examiner's Role

I was formally appointed by Wealden District Council in October 2017, with the agreement of Herstmonceux Parish Council, to conduct this examination. My role is known as an Independent Examiner. My selection has been facilitated by the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service which is administered by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).

In order for me to be appointed to this role, I am required to be appropriately experienced and qualified. I have over 39 years' experience as a planning practitioner, primarily working in local government, which included 8 years as a Head of Planning at a large unitary authority on the south coast, but latterly as an independent planning consultant. I am a Chartered Town Planner and a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute. I am independent of both Wealden District Council, and Herstmonceux Parish Council and I can confirm that I have no interest in any land that is affected by the Neighbourhood Plan.

Under the terms of the neighbourhood planning legislation I am required to make one of three possible recommendations:

That the Plan should proceed to referendum on the basis that it meets all the legal requirements;

That the Plan should proceed to referendum if modified; or

That the Plan should not proceed to referendum on the basis that it does not meet all the legal requirements.

Furthermore, if I am to conclude that the Plan should proceed to referendum I need to consider whether the area covered by the referendum should extend beyond the boundaries of area covered by the Herstmonceux Neighbourhood area.

In examining the Plan, the Independent Examiner is expected to address the following questions:

- a) Do the policies relate to the development and use of land for a Designated Neighbourhood Plan area in accordance with Section 38A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004?
- b) Does the Neighbourhood Plan meet the requirements of Section 38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 namely that it specifies the period to which it is to have effect? It must not relate to matters which are referred to as “excluded development” and also that it must not cover more than one Neighbourhood Plan area?
- c) Has the Neighbourhood Plan been prepared for an area designated under Section 61G of the Localism Act and has been developed and submitted by a qualifying body?

I am able to confirm that the Plan, if amended in line with my recommendations, does relate to the development and use of land, covering the area designated by Wealden District Council, for the Herstmonceux Neighbourhood Plan on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

I can also confirm that it does specify the period over which the Plan has effect namely the period from 2017 up to 2027.

I can confirm that the Plan does not cover any “excluded development”.

There are no other neighbourhood plans covering the area covered by the Plan designation.

Herstmonceux Parish Council is a “qualifying body” (QB) under the terms of the legislation.

## **The Examination Process**

The presumption is that the Neighbourhood Plan will proceed by way of an examination of written evidence only. However, the Examiner can ask for a public hearing in order to hear oral evidence on matters which he or she wishes to explore further or if a person has a fair chance to put a case.

I am required to give reasons for each of my recommendations and also provide a summary of my main conclusions.

I am satisfied that I am in a position to properly examine the Plan without the need for a hearing.

I carried out an unaccompanied visit to the village of Herstmonceux and the surrounding countryside on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2017. I spent the afternoon driving and walking around the area. Following that site visit, I did have some questions and matters that needed clarifying. These were set out in a document entitled Initial Comments of the Independent Examiner dated 4<sup>th</sup> January 2018. I subsequently received responses from both the Parish Council and the District Council. I subsequently had a question regarding the recreation facilities which I referred to both the Parish Council and the LPA. A copy of my questions and the responses have been placed on the Council's web site.

## **The Consultation Process**

It appears that there had been a previous attempt to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish. The Parish Council embarked on an earlier version in late 2012. The Parish was designated as a neighbourhood area by Wealden District Council on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

This first phase of plan making activity culminated in the publication of a Pre-Submission version of the Plan and a Regulation 14 consultation ran from 29<sup>th</sup> November 2013 to 24<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

This version of the Plan faced opposition from some residents as this Plan did include allocations. At the time, this also coincided with a District Council consultation on future housing sites. Therefore, work on the Neighbourhood Plan was postponed until after the 2015 Parish Council elections. In fact, work did not fully restart until early 2016. The Parish Council reviewed the work undertaken to date and carried out various new consultations which culminated in a Pre-Submission consultation taking place between 19<sup>th</sup> March and 19<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

During this stage of the Plan's preparation, the Working Group carried out various community engagement activities including open days, conducting surveys, holding workshops and visits to local groups and individual engagement with key stakeholders. Wider consultation with residents also included Parish Council newsletters, hosting a Neighbourhood Plan section on the Parish website, information leaflets, press releases and a business workshop.

The Regulation 14 consultation generated 43 individual comments from 18 individuals or organisations. These are fully set out in Appendix 3 of the Consultation Statement, which also explains how the final version of the Plan was amended, in the light of comments received.

## **Regulation 16 Consultation**

I have had regard, in carrying out this examination, to all the comments made during the period of final consultation, which took place over a 6-week period between 25<sup>th</sup> September 2017 and 6<sup>th</sup> November 2017. This consultation was organised by Wealden District Council, prior to it being passed to me for examination. That stage is known as the Regulation 16 Consultation.

In total 8 individual responses were received; from Historic England, Natural England, Highways England, Environment Agency, Southern Water, East Sussex County Council and two local residents.

I have carefully read all the correspondence and I will refer to the representations where it is relevant to my considerations and conclusions in respect of specific policies or the Plan as a whole.

## **The Basic Conditions**

The Neighbourhood Planning Examination process is different to a Local Plan Examination, in that the test is not one of "soundness". Instead, the Neighbourhood Plan is tested against what is known as the "Basic Conditions" which are set down in legislation. It will be against these criteria that my examination must focus.

The questions which constitute the basic conditions, consider whether the prescribed conditions are met and prescribed matters have been complied with. These tests seek to establish that the Neighbourhood Plan:

- Has had regard to the national policies and advice contained in the guidance issued by the Secretary of State and it is appropriate to make the Plan;
- Will the making of the Plan contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Will the making of the Plan be in general conformity with the strategic policies set out in the Development Plan for the area;
- The making of the Plan does not breach or is otherwise incompatible with EU obligations or human rights legislation, including the SEA Directive of 2001/42/EC;
- Whether prescribed conditions are met and prescribed matters have been complied with;
- Whether the making of the Plan will have a significant effect upon a European site or a European offshore marine site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 either alone or in combination with other plans and projects?

## **Compliance with the Development Plan**

Some relevant policies to this Neighbourhood Plan are found in the saved policies of the Wealden Local Plan, which was adopted in 1998. This established a development boundary around the village. This was supplemented by the Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan, which was adopted in February 2013. This defined Herstmonceux as a Local Service Centre, which is a settlement with a development boundary, but does not have more than limited access to social and economic infrastructure. Windmill Hill is designated as a Neighbourhood Centre as a settlement with limited or no facilities, but with access to another centre. The remainder of the area is defined as countryside with the area to the north of Herstmonceux, lying within the High Weald AONB. Herstmonceux Castle and the Observatory Science Centre site is identified in the Core Strategy as a Tourist Destination. Policy WSC6 proposes a net increase in housing of 70 units for the period up to 2027. This figure has already been exceeded by developments which have already been granted consent.

The District Council is currently working on new Local Plan and published its Draft Proposed Submission Version in March 2017. It is still collecting important evidence and it is expected the next version of the plan will be considered later this year. That new plan proposes a new development boundary for the village of Herstmonceux but does not allocate an increase in housing numbers, as permission exists for 129 houses. I have considered the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan against the saved policies of the 1998 Local Plan as it relates

to the development boundary and all the policies in the Core Strategy in terms of the basic condition test of “general conformity”.

## **Compliance with European and Human Rights Legislation**

Wealden District Council carried out a Screening Opinion on the Plan and concluded on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2016, having consulted the 3 consultation bodies, the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England, that the plan was unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment and a Strategic Environmental Assessment would not be required. Nevertheless, the Parish Council decided to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal incorporating a full Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as required by EU Directive 2001/42/EC, which is enshrined into UK law by the “Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004”. A Scoping Report was produced in July 2016 and was subsequently amended in November 2016.

Wealden District Council, as competent authority, initially considered that there were potential significant effects on protected sites through increases in atmospheric pollution at Ashdown Forest SAC, Lewes Downs SAC, Castle Hill SAC and Pevensey Levels SAC / Ramsar site; multiple effects of urbanisation at Ashdown Forest SPA/ SAC; increased recreational pressure at Ashdown Forest SPA, altered hydrological regime at Pevensey Levels SAC/ Ramsar site and decreased water quality at Pevensey Levels SAC/ Ramsar Site. The wording of a large number of policies was subsequently changed to take this into account, especially where there was the possibility of an impact, so as to require that any development relevant to the policy, must be subject of a Habitat Regulation Assessment. On that basis, the District Council concluded that the plan would not result in a likely significant effect and an Appropriate Assessment would not be required.

I am satisfied that the basic conditions regarding compliance with European legislation are met. I am also content that the Plan has no conflict with the Human Rights Act.

## **The Neighbourhood Plan: An Overview**

This Plan does not need to allocate additional housing land but relies upon allowing infill development within the development boundary. I am aware that planning permission has been granted for a significant new residential development within the plan area. I also note that the emerging local plan is proposing that the development boundary will be extended to the south of Herstmonceux.

I have had to make some changes to the proposals in the Plan, relating to the areas to be designated as local green space. This designation offers some of the highest level of protection to open space against new development. The presumption is that this green space should not be developed, except where very special circumstances apply. It is therefore somewhat contradictory, on the one hand for the Neighbourhood Plan to be seeking to protect specific areas of green space, yet at the same time to be promoting the construction of new buildings. Accordingly, I have recommended that the land where the proposed youth facility is to be built at Lime Cross should be excluded from the Local Green Space designation of the Football Pitch. Similarly, I recognise that some of the tourist and other ancillary facilities at Herstmonceux Castle will be required to be refreshed over the lifetime of the plan. As such I do not consider that this should be designated as Local Green Space. The Castle Grounds are already protected and I propose to recommend a separate policy dealing explicitly with the castle, its gardens and parkland.

The majority of my recommendations will not significantly change the Plan, but the alterations that I have recommended, will ensure that the policies comply with basic conditions. There are several instances where policies are not policies that can be used for the determination of planning application and are not policies for the development and use of land. I have therefore had to recommend that these policies be deleted as development plan policy, but they should be retained within the Neighbourhood Plan as Community Aspirations.

My proposed changes relate only to the wording of the planning policies and it will be necessary for some changes to be made to the supporting text and the numbering of policies etc. so that the final version of the Plan reads as a coherent document. These issues of editorial, factual or minor corrections are matters for the Parish Council to address in consultation with Wealden District Council.

## **The Neighbourhood Plan Policies**

### **Policy 1 – Spatial Planning Principles for the Parish**

A planning application will be required to be considered against all relevant policies in the Neighbourhood Plan and where appropriate the Local Plan. Proviso 1, effectively, is a policy that requires a development to have to comply with another policy in the Plan. Policy 11 is the design policy, and highlighting that policy over others, may imply that it has more weight than other policies. In the same vein, the adequacy of infrastructure is one of the criteria (no 12) of that policy. I will propose that this element is removed as it reduces the clarity that a Neighbourhood Plan is expected to exhibit.

I have noted the comments of East Sussex County Council in their Regulation 16 consultation response, and propose to add a requirement to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the AONB to reflect the objective of paragraphs 115 and 117 of the NPPF.

I am concerned regarding the requirement that “Development addresses identified local need and deliver community benefit”. I consider that elements of this policy fail the test of compliance with national policy, and in particular the presumption in favour of sustainable development, which may be entirely acceptable development, but does not necessarily meet local need or deliver a community benefit. Under the logic of the policy, if local need is not addressed and there is no evidence of community benefit, then the presumption is that the application be refused. I note that the policy allows the possibility of material circumstances indicating otherwise. However, that is the test of any planning application, as the NPPF states: “Proposed development that accords with an up-to-date Local Plan should be approved, and proposed development that conflicts should be refused unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.” That is set out in legislation in Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The consideration of other material considerations should not be an element of the policy but a consideration against which a planning policy is balanced. The policy also goes beyond the scope of the strategic policy in the Core Strategy, as set out in Policy WCS 14 which reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

I am concerned that the emphasis of meeting local needs and the delivery of community benefits runs counter to the requirement that a neighbourhood plan should “plan positively to support local development”, not just development that addresses local needs. I will introduce the presumption in favour of sustainable development but will accept that can include development that meets local need can delivers sustainable development.

I have no comments on the remainder of the policy which reflects the advice set out in the NPPF.

#### *Recommendations*

Delete proviso 1

In proviso 2 after “landscape” insert “, biodiversity”

Replace proviso 3 with “Proposals deliver sustainable development which improves the environmental, social and economic conditions in the area, in particular, those that meet local need and deliver community benefit.”

## Policy 2: Local Green Spaces

Paragraph 76 of the NPPF states that by designating Local Green Space, local communities will be able to rule out new development on open space which are demonstrably special to the local community, other than in very special circumstances. I have no concerns with the principle of the identification of any of any of the sites identified, apart from Herstmonceux Castle Grounds and Garden.

However, I do not consider it compatible with the purpose of protecting LGS, as set out in the NPPF, whilst at the same time acknowledging in Policy 5 that a substantial new building is to be constructed on it. I note that planning permission has been granted for a substantial sports and youth facility building on the edge of the Lime Cross football pitch. I have sought details of the extent of the building and its parking area. I therefore propose to recommend the reduction in the extent of the proposed LGS - GS03 by removing a strip of land, parallel to Gardner Street, where the proposed building will be sited as shown on the plan entitled Lime Cross Recreation Area as marked 1 provided by the Qualifying Body on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2017. The extent of the area is shown on a map in this recommendation. This land will still be protected by Policy 5.

Regarding the Castle and its grounds, I am not convinced that it meets the criteria of being in reasonably close proximity to the community that it serves. It is also a paid for facility although public footpaths do cross the site. Furthermore, the policy as submitted, recognises that new development may be required, to sustain the facility's tourism, recreation, leisure and education role. To designate the site as Local Green Space would be inherently contradictory to Policy 3 which designates the Castle as a location where the improvement and enhancement of the site will be supported. I agree with the comments, previously made by Historic England, that this site should be the subject to its own policy that recognises its importance to the local area which is based on its historic and tourism importance and which allows appropriate development to support that role. I do not consider that to be consistent with a designation of Local Green Space. I will be recommending that it be removed from the list of LGS designations.

I also will be recommending for the sake of clarity, that the policy refers not to development being "resisted" and for it to say that development will not be approved, other than in very special circumstances.

### *Recommendations*

Amend the Proposals Map to reduce the extent of the LGS at site GS03 – Football Pitch at Lime Cross to just the area shown as 2 on the plan below and remove the land shown north of the dotted line with the number 1 attached. The

designation should not include the land marked as 3 as this currently does not form part of the open space.



Remove GS01 from the Policy and the Proposals Map.

In the second sentence of the final paragraph replace “be resisted” with “not be approved,”

Delete all the text in the third sentence of the final paragraph of the policy

Insert a new policy at an appropriate location within the neighbourhood plan entitled: “Herstmonceux Castle and Grounds”. The policy to read as follows:

“Proposals for development that will support the use of Herstmonceux Castle and Grounds for the purposes of tourism, recreation, leisure and education will be approved provided that the development has been designed to preserve and sustain the historic interest and landscape amenity of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of the castle or its associated listed buildings and their setting and the Registered Parks and Garden as shown on the Map GSO1 – Herstmonceux Castle and Grounds

Any development relevant to this policy must be subject to a Habitat Regulations Assessment”

The policy needs to be accompanied by appropriate supporting text.

### **Policy 3: Resisting the Loss of Employment Locations**

I consider that the policy is generally compatible with national and strategic policy. I do think that there is a lack of clarity in that the policy and the accompanying maps refer to *locations and business names* but does not define the area to which the policy applies. At my request the Qualifying Body has prepared a series of site plans showing the extent of these sites and propose to refer to these plans in my recommendation and these should be incorporated into the plan document.

The first paragraph is the objective of the policy, rather than a statement of how a planning application will be determined. I will be recommending that the paragraph be incorporated into the supporting text. The drafting of the text introducing the final set of six criteria suggests that proposals will be “supported provided the following points are taken into account”. To improve the precision of the policy, I will be recommending that applications will be “approved if” the criteria are satisfied. Finally, criteria v. is essentially a duplicate of the final paragraph of the policy and is an unnecessary duplication.

#### **Recommendations**

Move the first paragraph from the policy to the supporting text.

In the penultimate paragraph “The improvement and enhancement...” replace “supported provided the following points are taken into account” with “approved if”.

Delete criterion v.

Replace the maps in Appendix B Policy 3 with the Maps - Policy 3 Sites 1-18 provided by the Qualifying Body on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

### **Policy 4: Retail Development in the Parish**

The first paragraph and its accompanying text again points out what the policy sets out to achieve, rather than being a policy and I will be recommending that they be moved to the supporting text.

The criteria i. includes the proviso “unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise”. As previously mentioned, it is not a role of a planning policy to articulate the statutory requirement to weigh “the development plan against other material circumstances”. This is the duty that any decision maker must exercise, when looking at the planning balance. I will recommend that that wording be deleted.

The final element of criteria ii relating to the development being “proportionate in size, form, scale and height of surrounding buildings” is already covered by Policy

11 and its inclusion could reduce the clarity as to which policy a proposal is required to comply with.

Similarly, criteria iii. is a policy that requires a proposal, to comply with another policy in the plan and will for the same reason reduce the clarity of the Plan.

#### *Recommendations*

Move the first paragraph from the policy to the supporting text.

Delete “with regard to retail development: - “

In i. delete “, unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise”

In ii. delete all text after “viable”

Delete iii.

### **Policy 5 Sports, Leisure and Recreation Facilities in Herstmonceux Parish**

Again, the first paragraph sets out the intention behind the policy, rather than set the policy against which a planning application will be determined. It is a valuable statement and should be moved to the supporting text

I note that arising from the new residential developments that there will be new areas of sports, leisure and recreational sites, which are to be provided. I consider that it is important that these proposed facilities, once provided will equally be protected from inappropriate development in the future even though they are not currently shown on the Proposals map. I will propose an amendment to the wording of the policy to provide for this.

#### *Recommendation*

Move the first paragraph from the policy to the supporting text.

Insert after “...Proposal Map)” insert “or new sport, leisure or recreational facilities provided as part of any new residential development”.

### **Policy 6: Redevelopment of the former public toilet site, Herstmonceux**

This is a locally distinct policy which passes the basic conditions test.

### **Policy 7: Refurbishment and extension to the car park at Herstmonceux Recreation Ground.**

The County Highways Authority in its Regulation 14 and 16 consultation response, points out that if two-way traffic cannot be provided along the access road because of the limited width could lead to traffic building up on the A271 affecting highway

safety. I am content that the proposal relates to the extension to the car park and I consider that the actual design of the access road and its entrance, to the main road, will be a matter that can be dealt with at the planning application stage.

I do not believe that the policy need to be amended to comply with the basic conditions.

### **Policy 8: Rights of Way in Herstmonceux Parish**

Again, the first paragraph is a statement of the objective of the policy and should be moved to the supporting text. However, the second paragraph relates to the formation of a Bridleway Group. This is not a policy for the “use and development of land” which can be used to determine planning applications. I will be recommending that the paragraph be moved from the policy to be in the Community Aspiration and Action Plan section on the Plan.

Issues regarding the maintenance of the existing rights of way network is again a non-land use matter and should be moved to the Community Aspiration section of the plan.

#### *Recommendations*

Move the first paragraph from the policy to the supporting text.

Delete the second paragraph and move to Non-Statutory Community Aspirations and Action Plan.

Delete the second sentence of the third paragraph and move to Non-Statutory Community Aspirations and Action Plan.

### **Policy 9: Creation of new shared access from Windmill Hill to Herstmonceux**

I consider that this is a proposal that is a policy for the “use and development of land”, especially if the route is on non-highway land. I have no recommendations to make on the proposal.

### **Policy 10: Mobile Phone Connectivity and Broadband**

I have no comments to make in terms of the basic conditions.

### **Policy 11: The Design of Development in the Parish**

The policy as written relates to “all development”. There will be some development that could relate to the use of land, and design policies would not be relevant. I will propose that the policy should relate to the construction of new buildings.

The only requirement that could conflict with Secretary of State's policy and advice is requirement 8, in as much as it relates to "sustainable design and construction techniques to meet high standards for energy efficiency and water efficiency". The Secretary of State made a Written Statement to the House of Commons dated 25<sup>th</sup> March 2015. This states that "...neighbourhood plans.... should not set any additional local standards or requirements relating to the construction, internal layout or performance of new dwellings." This policy therefore should not relate to residential dwellings. Notwithstanding, that I do not consider that the policy passes the test of precision, as it does not allow the applicant or the decision maker to know what is expected, in terms of high standards for energy efficiency and water efficiency, beyond the requirements of compliance with the Building Regulation. I will be recommending that this criterion be deleted.

#### *Recommendations*

In the first sentence, replace "development" with "new building".

Delete bullet point 8

### **Policy 12: Windfall Sites**

I have no concerns regarding the policy as it relates to development within the development boundary. In terms of sites which are outside the Development Boundary, I do not consider that a policy which requires proposals to be "considered on a case by case basis" is a policy. It offers no certainty to an applicant or guidance to the decision maker. I will be recommending that these words be deleted from the policy.

#### *Recommendation*

In the second paragraph delete "on a case by case basis".

### **Policy 13: Older People's Housing Needs**

I have no comments to make in respect of this policy as it relates to basic conditions.

### **Policy 14: Herstmonceux Community Land Trust**

I do not consider that this is a policy that can be used to determine a planning application. I consider that this is an expression of Parish Council policy, as to how it will pursue development in the parish and can be incorporated in the plan, but it should be moved to the non-statutory Community Aspiration and Action Plan chapter.

*Recommendation*

That the policy be deleted and moved to Non-Statutory Community Aspirations and Action Plan.

**Policy 15: Infrastructure Investment**

This is a legitimate statement of the priorities that the Parish Council will attach to the spending of funds that it receives as part of the Community Infrastructure Levy. However, it is not a policy that relates to the determination of a planning application but is a statement of budgetary priorities. As such it should be moved to the Community Aspiration section of the plan.

*Recommendation*

That the policy be deleted and moved to Non-Statutory Community Aspirations and Action Plan.

**The Referendum Area**

If I am to recommend that the Plan progresses to its referendum stage, I am required to confirm whether the referendum should cover a larger area than the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan. In this instance, I can confirm that the area of the Herstmonceux Parish Neighbourhood Plan as designated by Wealden District Council on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2014, is the appropriate area for the referendum to be held and the area for the referendum does not need to be extended.

**Summary**

I appreciate that this Neighbourhood Plan had a “false start” but the Herstmonceux Parish Council Steering Group are to be congratulated on resurrecting the work started earlier and have now produced a clear and concise, locally distinct Neighbourhood Plan. It is a coherent policy document that seeks to address the challenges that are facing this part of East Sussex over the next decade. It will form a sound basis for determining planning applications into the future.

To conclude, I can confirm that my overall conclusions are that the Plan, if amended in line with my recommendations, meets all the statutory requirements including the basic conditions test and that it is appropriate, if successful at referendum, that the Plan, as amended, be made.

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**I am therefore delighted to recommend to the Wealden District Council that the Herstmonceux Parish Neighbourhood Plan, as modified by my recommendations, should now proceed to referendum.**

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6<sup>th</sup> February 2018