

NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

PARISH OF HELLINGLY

TOPIC PAPER NO. 10

HOUSING

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Hellingly Neighbourhood Development Plan – Housing

1. Thirty years ago Hellingly was a larger parish than it is today in both area and population. It included Upper Horsebridge and the Anglesey Avenue and Landsdowne estates. In 1991, however, the Boundary Commission decreed that these areas should be transferred to Hailsham. Hellingly reverted to a predominantly rural parish with 3 villages – Lower Dicker, Lower Horsebridge and Hellingly itself. But it was not destined to stay like that.

Wealden Local Plan 1998

2. Hellingly Hospital had been running down for several years and finally closed in the early 1990s. Its buildings remained vacant, became increasingly derelict and were subject to vandalism.
3. The Wealden Local Plan 1998 allocated the built-up areas of the hospital for residential development to accommodate up to 400 dwellings and its grounds for a school, community hall and public open space. Outline planning permission for such a development was granted in 2006 but construction did not commence for another 4 or 5 years.
4. The planning permission has now been substantially completed although the proposed school was not pursued and the community hall has yet to be built. In the event, the number of dwellings provided at what is now known as Roebuck Park totalled around 450.
5. Another 28 dwellings were built as affordable homes on 'exception sites': at Court Lodge, Coldharbour Road, Lower Dicker (14 approved in 2010) and at Field Close, North Street, Lower Horsebridge (14 approved in 2012).
6. These developments have together led to a significant increase in the number of people living in the parish. In 2001 the census recorded a population of 1,447. By October 2016 the number of persons on the electoral register for the parish had reached 1,964. Since this latter figure excludes persons under 17 years of age or otherwise unregistered, it is clear that the population of the parish has nearly doubled in the last decade. But more is to come!

Wealden Local Plan 2013

7. In February 2013 Wealden District Council (WDC) adopted its Core Strategy Local Plan, subsequently renamed the Wealden Local Plan. This provided for another 700 dwellings to be built on land off Park Road, to the south of New Road and west of the Cuckoo Trail as an extension to North Hailsham together with 8,650m² of employment floorspace, 300m² of retail space and a 2-form entry primary school.
8. In October 2013 as part of the allocation of 700 outline planning permission was granted for the provision of 240 dwellings on the west side of Park Road to the south of the Sussex Plants Nursery. This is now under construction on a phased basis with the first phase having been substantially completed.
9. In April 2014 outline planning permission was granted for the remaining 460 dwellings plus the school and employment and retail floorspace on land to the east of Park

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Road and south of New Road. Detailed planning consent has been granted and building is due to commence shortly.

10. Other permissions which have been granted and are now in an advanced stage of implementation include The Golden Martlet and Danecroft Nurseries, Station Road, Hellingly (17 dwellings at each site) and Holmbury, Crystal Dispensing Lower Horsebridge (6 dwellings). There have also been a number of conversions and new dwellings replacing redundant agricultural dwellings.
11. The developments will, when fully implemented and occupied, cause the population of the parish to rise above its October 2016 level by about a further two-thirds. But it will not end there!

Wealden Local Plan 2017

12. On 22 March 2017 WDC noted progress on, but did not approve, a new draft Local Plan. Approval was withheld pending the completion of certain studies, most notably on nitrogen deposition on Ashdown Forest, the outcome of which could significantly affect the amount and distribution of development to be allocated in the period 2017-2032.
13. It remains to be seen whether or not the draft plan is eventually approved in its present form. If it is, then it has to go through the process of public deposit and an examination in public before a government inspector which could result in its modification. In the circumstances, the best that can be done is to prepare the neighbourhood development plan (NDP) in the context of the District Council's latest known thinking.
14. The District Council's new draft plan proposes to extend the development boundary of Hailsham so that it runs northwards up the Cuckoo Trail to Mill Lane, along Mill Lane to Park Road, up Grove Hill and into The Drive, and then eastwards along the southern boundary of Park Wood (See Appendix A). Within this area it allocates land for 770 dwellings to the north of New Road and 223 dwellings on the Sussex Plants Nursery to the west of Park Road, a total of 993 dwellings – more than twice the size of the new Roebuck Park development.
15. WDC will be preparing more detailed guidelines for the development of these strategic sites in due course and the Hellingly NDP should not attempt to pre-empt that process. It is however, entitled to have regard to the effect of their development on other parts of the parish such as their impact on local roads in the vicinity and the need for a wider traffic management plan. Topic Paper No 9 on Outdoor Playing Space has also drawn attention to the desirability of locating the youth and adult recreation facilities required by the draft plan close to the Hellingly Country Park so that they can be managed and maintained together, enhance biodiversity and facilitate social integration.
16. The draft Wealden Local Plan also extends the Hailsham Development boundary to include an area along the north side of the A22 at Lower Dicker between the Boship Roundabout and Nash Lane (see Appendix A). This is because it is proposed to

provide 38,600m² of employment space within that area as part of the wider South Wealden Growth Area centred on the A22.

17. The draft plan does not however allocate sites within the development boundary for employment purposes as it does for housing development. This could lead to uncoordinated schemes which are inappropriate to Lower Dicker village, injurious to traffic flows and inefficient in terms of layout and sharing of amenities. It would be far more preferable for the NDP to allocate sufficient land for 38,600m² of employment floorspace plus ancillary parking and circulation space in suitable locations, thereby making the development boundary superfluous.
18. Outside the Hailsham Development Boundary the draft plan makes only 2 specific housing land allocations. One is for an additional 78 dwellings at Lower Horsebridge. The other is for up to 30 dwellings at Hellingly Village. These proposals are considered below.

Lower Horsebridge

19. At the end of 2015 outline permission was granted for 12 dwellings on greenfield land exception site on the east side of North Street, Lower Horsebridge. Although outside any development boundary, they were considered acceptable because they were to be affordable units managed by a housing association. Shortly afterwards in spring 2016, a full application was approved increasing the number of dwellings to 32, of which 18 would be affordable.
20. The draft Local Plan allocates land in the same place for 110 dwellings, including the 32 already approved (a net increase of 78). The Parish Council had strongly objected to the earlier planning applications, primarily on the ground that the site suffers from high groundwater levels and is prone to surface flooding (see Topic Paper No 5 – Flooding) and is equally opposed to the proposed allocation.
21. The Parish Council, through the Chairman and District Councillor, has met Wealden's planning officers and suggested that it would be a more sustainable development for all or most of the 78 dwellings not already approved to be located instead on the land south of New Road previously intended for employment uses. The District Council no longer considers that land to be suitable as an employment site and would prefer it to be located in Lower Dicker (see para 16). It remains to be seen whether or not the District Council adopts this suggestion.
22. Topic Paper No 9 – Outdoor Playing Space explains how a planning application was submitted towards the end of 2016 to develop land on the former fairground field to the east of the Recreation Ground in Lower Horsebridge for 10 dwellings fronting on to the A271 and to transfer the remainder of the field to the Parish Council for use for recreation purposes. This would be an 'enabling' development which would permit the enlargement of the Recreation Ground to accommodate much needed car parking and an indoor sports facility.

Hellingly Village

23. The draft Wealden Local Plan identifies a Core Area boundary for Hellingly Village (see Appendix B) which happens to be the boundary of the Conservation Area prior to its enlargement in March 2017. Within this Core Area boundary are the parish church and 28 dwellings, 18 of which are statutorily listed and another 2 recommended for local listing.
24. The draft plan proposes that up to 30 dwellings be provided within or adjoining this Core Area. This would double the size of this historic village. In practice there is only one area where residential development would be feasible because the surrounding areas to the east, south and west experiences regular flooding. Indeed, there have been times when the village is effectively cut off. That area would be most unlikely to access on to Church Lane, a single carriageway sunken lane, and would therefore have to access on to Mill Lane which is narrow and regularly floods at both ends.
25. The Village Character Assessment undertaken by an external consultant and included in Topic Paper No 7 considers that a development of this scale would be harmful to the character and appearance of the recently enlarged conservation area and that a much smaller development of around 5 dwellings is the most that could be satisfactorily provided.
26. Although not within the Core Area of Hellingly Village, Hellingly Community Primary School occupies a site off North Street, midway between Hellingly Village and Lower Horsebridge. Were the school to relocate to the site of the proposed new primary school on land off Park Road it is considered that the vacated site would prove suitable for housing and could provide much needed affordable housing for local inhabitants.

Lower Dicker

27. In the recently adopted East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton and Hove Waste and Minerals Sites Plan, the former Shep Plastics factory on the A22 in Lower Dicker, just to the west of the Boship Hotel, is allocated as a waste transfer site. The County Council has acknowledged that “due to the small size of the site and proximity to sensitive receptors, larger recycling or recovery facilities are unlikely to be suitable” (see Appendix c). The sensitive receptors, include the Boship Hotel, the adjacent Zoar Chapel and cemetery, 4 houses recommended for local listing and other unlisted dwellings. The factory occupies the site of the former Dicker Pottery and is in the centre of the historic part of the village.
28. It is unclear whether the County Council has secured the site. It is currently being advertised for sale which suggests otherwise. It would be preferable from both the utility and environmental view points for the waste site to be located further to the west on the land to be allocated for employment uses in the NDP. If this were done, the 5ha factory site could be far more appropriately developed for residential purposes, probably accommodating between 12-15 dwellings depending on their size and design.

Conclusion

29. The Hellingly NDP would be in conflict with the draft Wealden Local Plan if it were to propose a smaller number of dwellings. However, a modest redistribution of those dwellings may be considered acceptable. For the reasons set out in this paper it is suggested that:

- a) The Hellingly NDP support the reallocation of all or most of the 78 dwellings proposed for North Street, Lower Horsebridge, on to land south of New Road previously proposed but no longer required for employment uses
- b) The Hellingly NDP reallocates the up to 30 dwellings proposed for Hellingly Village as follows:

Hellingly Village	5 dwellings
Lower Horsebridge (part of fairground field)	10 dwellings
Lower Dicker (Shep Plastics factory)	12-15 dwellings

- c) The Hellingly NDP supports the allocation of the site of Hellingly Community Primary School for housing should the school relocate