

My name is David White.

I am the present Chairman of Hellingly Parish Council having been a member of the Council since 1987 and its chairman since 1990. I am also a member of Wealden District Council for the Hellingly Ward, a position that I have held since 2003, and I am one of two representatives of Wealden Council on the Pevensey and Cuckmere Water Level Management Board. Finally I have, since its formation in 2001, been Chairman of the Cuckmere Flood Forum a partnership of the nine parishes through which the Cuckmere River flows that was established after the severe floods in the year 2000 to monitor and report on Cuckmere Flood events.

In response to the invitation set out in the Localism Act 2011 and notwithstanding the considerable financial costs involved for a small parish the Council resolved to pursue a Neighbourhood plan in order both engage residents more directly in the planning process and to give them an opportunity of shaping the immediate environment in which they live. All too often residents are left with the feeling that planning is something that is imposed upon them either by developers motivated by profit or distant planners who do not have to live with the consequences of their decisions whilst the views and wishes of local people are largely ignored.

A steering group comprising local people was appointed, a public meeting of Parishioners was held, and a series of focus group meetings with farmers, local business owners, voluntary groups and those concerned with the environment, organized. As a result of feedback gathered from the consultations a draft plan reflecting the wishes hopes and aspirations of those who had participated was prepared and consulted upon. With the result of the consultation a series of topic papers were commissioned to provide background evidence and support for the findings and policies that were then set out in the proposed plan sent to the District Council for confirmation of its conformity with both National and Local Planning Policy.

Delays and changes in the text have been experienced as a consequence of changes in planning policy and the need for the Neighbourhood plan to be in conformity with both National and local Planning Policy but it is hoped now that the emerging New District Plan has been found to be unsound and withdrawn that our Hellingly Neighbourhood Plan can progress and bring a

little more certainty and structure to the planning in an area that undoubtedly going to see more development.

Hellingly Parish is a large predominantly rural parish on the northern edge of Hailsham. It has two public houses, a petrol filling station, a hotel and a motel, a church, a chapel, a golf course a garden centre, a veterinary practice, and two industrial centres one a planned estate with a mix of small to medium sized purpose built units and the other created out of former farm buildings. However the potential for local employment in the Parish is very limited. In addition it has no shops, no doctors surgery, no dental practice, and no business or professional offices. Residents of the Parish are obliged to travel to the neighbouring town of Hailsham or beyond for employment and the majority of their needs and services and although there are now two primary schools (one of which has been newly opened to accommodate the demand created by recent developments) children of a secondary age also have to travel, often some distance to secondary schools and colleges in neighbouring towns.

There is no one centre for the Parish, rather it is made up of four character areas; the Village, Lower Horsebridge, Upper Dicker and the newly developed Roebuck Park with a series of other scattered groupings of properties along roads or comprising former farm settlements.

Until 2003 the size of the Parish was relatively static at about 550 dwellings. However in 2006 consent was given for a redevelopment of 460 new homes on the site of the former Hellingly Hospital (Roebuck Park) and in 2013 consent was given for a further 700 new homes on land north of the A271 East of the Cuckoo trail (Burfield Grange and Hellingly Green) effectively trebling the size of the parish in the space of ten years.

With the need to provide even more homes in the District it is inevitable that the Parish should take a proportion of that growth. Recognizing this and accepting that the decisions as to both the location and quantum of major new developments is likely to be determined by the District Council the Parish Council though the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to guide and enhance the character of the area for the benefit of both existing and new residents by identifying areas unsuited to major development.

Heavy impermeable Wealden clays underlie much of the Parish; parts of the Parish are low lying and have a high water table, parts of the Parish regularly flood. In times of climate change the importance of managing flood risks from whatever source, groundwater, pluvial flood and run off or fluvial flood and the need to make space for water management should not be underestimated. Equally the importance of soil retention and the avoidance of remodeling the local landscape with the threat to accentuating flood risks elsewhere should not be ignored. The value of the natural green spaces in a locality with the benefits that these bring to the local ecology and to the health and sense of wellbeing of residents should be important in the planning process. The Parish Council believes that the Neighbourhood plan that has been prepared will assist in guiding the future development of the Parish by identifying that which is important to residents and encouraging development where appropriate whilst at the same time ensuring that care is taken not to destroy or detract from that which is important to residents nor damaging to the environment.

David G White LLB

Chairman Hellingly Parish Council

16.02.20