**Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan**

**Response to Independent Examiner's Note 1**

**Prepared by the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

**8 December 2023**

Dear Sir

This note has been prepared by the Steering Group (SG) for the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan (NP) on behalf of Wadhurst Parish Council (WPC). We are grateful for the opportunity to provide further clarification on the points raised below.

***Examiner Query 6b: The Wadhurst Design Code March 2023 (DC)***

**Response from WPC:**

The intention is that the DC forms an explicit part of the Neighbourhood Plan. This is considered to align with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) para 129, which states that "Design guides and codes can be prepared at an area-wide, neighbourhood or site-specific scale, and to carry weight in decision-making should be produced either as part of a plan or as supplementary planning documents" (underlining by WPC).

External consultants, Create Streets, were commissioned by WPC to prepare the DC, within the context of national policy and guidance and reflecting the views of Wadhurst residents. WPC, with Create Streets, would be content to respond accordingly to WDC's detailed comments on the DC prior to the Referendum, although we would not wish this to delay the overall process of making the NP.

***Examiner Query 6c and 6d: Policy WAD14 Bewl Water Reservoir area and associated public activities***

**Response from WPC:**

Bewl Water is recognised as one of the most important natural green spaces in the parish and is the largest body of inland body of water in the South East. It is valued for its naturalness, biodiversity and access to it by parishioners and the wider public for the enjoyment of its open space, natural beauty, dark skies, tranquillity, recreational and leisure activities and beautiful views into and out of the area. Access to such green space contributes to the mental and physical health and wellbeing of the community.

There is a concern that the site may become over-commercialised, which would be detrimental to these qualities.

The site does, however, offer unique opportunities for a range of water-based recreational activities and residents are keen to support such uses, but in a way that does not detrimentally impact the particular qualities for which Bewl Water is treasured, as described above.

This will contribute to the promotion of the revival of Bewl Water to its former pre-eminent level as a major UK centre for member- run club organised sailing, rowing and similar serious watersports – previous landlord actions have destroyed Bewl Water as a major centre for member-run club

organised family and competitive sailing, windsurfing and similar serious watersports in the south east of England.

In particular, the member run rowing club at the site has been forced to limit its membership to around 200 people (approx. 40% non-adult) with a long waiting list for membership because it is unable to fulfil its safeguarding obligations for younger members. This is because it shares changing, WC and shower facilities and does not have its own clubhouse; only a storage shed for around half its boats. The club has ambitions for a clubhouse at Bewl Water, which it is willing to share with other watersports organisations and other community organisations.

The NP policy supports the establishment of clubhouse facilities for member-run watersport clubs, as opposed to a landlord-run club, which would be accessible to the community. Use classes F2 b & c would enable such a development or other developments that enable community benefit, and the policy sets out the criteria that should be met to ensure this such development is undertaken in a sustainable way that recognises the qualities specific to this area.

WPC consider that the Policy adds additional local detail to WDC Policy TM1, by supporting particular uses and setting out more locally specific criteria that applies particularly to Bewl Water, as opposed to the wider district. In a similar way, whilst national policy applies strict criteria to development with AONBs, WPC consider that the NP policy applies this in a more locally specific way to recognise not only the intrinsic values of the AONB but the values of this particular feature within in it. This aligns with para 28 of the NPPF.

We are grateful for the opportunity to provide further clarification on these points.

Yours faithfully

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Chair of the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group