

Comment on Rother District Council, Draft Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment

Part 2, Site Assessments.

Chapter 4 - Rye and the Eastern Settlements Cluster

My comments relate specifically to the proposals for development in Iden. Potential sites are identified on p46 – 52 of the above document and I refer particularly to the one at Street Field, Main Street (IDE0010).

Infrastructure

Iden is not on the mains gas network. Residents have to rely on oil, electricity or wood burning for energy.

We can normally rely on two or three electricity outages per year and three or four water stoppages, sometimes for days at a time

Another ten houses in the village will place additional strain on the existing resources and contribute to further shortages.

The nearest GP practice is Rye Medical Centre. The current waiting time for a face to face appointment is a month. The extra potential patients in their catchment area will contribute to a further deterioration of an already unacceptable service.

In short, the existing infrastructure is inadequate to meet the needs of the proposal.

Road safety

The B2082 through Iden is subject to a 30 mph speed limit however there are no speed cameras or other road safety devices to deter drivers from exceeding this and many do on a regular basis. There have been at least two collisions in the last couple of months where speed has been a contributory factor.

Being relatively isolated, Iden residents often rely on deliveries by supermarkets or online retailers. This means a significant proportion of road traffic through the village consists of delivery drivers which is usually left unaccounted for by developers carrying out traffic assessments.

The addition of around 20 private motor vehicles to the village will create an increased risk of road traffic collisions.

Traffic and Transport

Iden has a small shop/ Post Office however residents rely on Rye for wider services and shops. Rye is not within reasonable walking distance and, even if it were, there are no safe walking routes along the main route (B2082).

Cycling is equally hazardous as the main road surface is in a terrible condition, even after recent 'repairs' and the national speed limit applies as soon as you go beyond the village boundary.

A bus service operates through the village but there are only six or seven buses a day and none run early or late enough to accommodate reasonable commuting, particularly to anywhere outside Rye.

Rye does have a railway station however the trains run one per hour in either direction (West to Hastings or East to Ashford). Both trains leave around the same time each hour. Unfortunately the bus from Iden arrives shortly after the trains have left resulting in a poorly connected transport service.

The result is that Iden residents have to rely heavily on their own cars.

Again, the transport infrastructure is inadequate to meet the transport needs of any additional residents unless the local authority are seeking to increase reliance on private motor vehicles.

Affordable Housing/ Community

We have seen at the proposed Conkers site (IDE0001) that developers have put forward a proposal including affordable housing but otherwise mainly unacceptable. They have then put forward a revised plan, ostensibly in response to local objections, where the affordable housing has disappeared due to 'viability' concerns. What measures are the local authority taking to ensure this doesn't happen with the proposed development site at Street Field?

Given the lack of adequate local and transport infrastructure, as well as the poor employment sustainability (see para 5.62 Proposed Rother Local Plan 2020 – 2040) any houses on the open market are more likely to be bought as second homes or let on AirBnB. There are already many of these in Iden and experience has shown that owners of such properties are less likely to engage with or contribute to the village community.

Environment

On page 47 of the Site Assessments the local authority comments

'sightlines would need to be increased by the cutting back of vegetation, and a footway provided outside the site.'

It also notes that this a historic field boundary, the effective destruction of which would surely be contrary to local authority policy.

I note also that other sites in the area have been rejected as development would entail the loss of 'rural views that are afforded eastwards [which are] important to the rural character of the village.' It is unclear how this site is any different.

In Rother's current Development and Site Allocation Plan it refers to development in Iden as follows:

There is very limited scope for development in and around the village [Iden]. There is little opportunity for infill within the development boundary. Development east of the village, where extensive views may be gained across the countryside, would encroach negatively into the wider AONB landscape. (Similarly) development to the south would inappropriately extend growth along Main Street, encroaching into an area of rural character.

In light of the above, the adoption of Street Field as a potential development site appears to a contradictory and disjointed approach.

Heritage

The development of Street Field would have a direct impact on the setting of at least four listed buildings: Danesbury, Deacons, East View and Lamb's Orchard. The fact that the name of one of these (East View) references views to the east suggests any development obstructing this view would constitute significant harm to it's setting.

Existing Development Plans

The land south of Elmsmead (IDE0001) is already subject to a proposal for 12 new houses. In light of this I question the need for an additional 10 at this time.