Rother District Council
Town Hall
London Road
Bexhill-on-Sea
East Sussex
TN39 3JX

Rother Local Plan 2020 – 2040

Draft (Regulation 18) Version
April 2024

Consultation Form

Consultation - 12 weeks from 30 April – 23 July 2024 at 5pm

We are preparing the new **Rother Local Plan**. It will guide development and land use in our area. We want to work with our communities to shape Rother's future.

We are consulting on the draft (Regulation 18) version of the new Local Plan. The consultation will last for 12 weeks. Comments cannot be accepted beyond 5pm on 23 July 2024

The Draft Local Plan and all of its supporting evidence base documents can be found on the Council's website at https://www.rother.gov.uk/draftlocalplan

The easiest way to respond to the consultation on the Draft Local Plan is via our Consultation website at https://rother.oc2.uk/login. You can comment on any part of the plan. Alternatively, comments can be made by submitting this consultation form.

If submitting comments by email, please send to draftlocalplan@rother.gov.uk. If submitting comments by post, please address correspondence to The Planning Policy Team, Rother District Council, Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea, TN39 3JX. Please note that submissions made via post will not receive confirmation that they have been received.

Please use the below comment boxes in Part B of this form to make comments on the Plan. Please also use Part B to record comments on the Plan's supporting evidence base.

Part C of this form includes an equalities monitoring survey.

Rother
District Council

Part A Personal Details – You must provide these details for us to accept your consultation response

	Please enter your details
Title	Mr
First Name	Asher
Surname	Ross
Job Title (where relevant)	Director of Planning
Organisation (where relevant)	
Address	[redacted]
Post Code	
Email address	

Agents Details or Other Details (if making a representation on behalf of the above consultee)

	Please enter your details
Title	
First Name	
Surname	
Job Title (where relevant)	
Organisation (where relevant)	
Address	
Post Code	
Email address	

Privacy Policy Statement

Rother District Council is committed to ensuring that your privacy is protected and will only use and store your personal data in line with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 and the Data Protection Act 1998. We collect and use your personal data in order to provide services you have requested from us or to carry out our legal obligations to you. We will not disclose your personal data to any third parties, unless we need to do so to provide a service to you or we are legally required to do so. We may share your personal data with other Council departments in order to provide the service you have requested and to ensure that the information we hold about you is accurate and up to date. Our Privacy Policy sets out how we collect, use and securely hold your data and can be viewed on our privacy policy page at https://www.rother.gov.uk/data-protection-and-foi/privacy-policy/. If you want more information on how a particular Council service uses your personal data, please view the Privacy Notices at the bottom of the above privacy policy page.

Please be aware that any comments you submit cannot be treated in confidence as Regulation 30 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, as amended, requires copies of all representations to be made publicly available. The Council will publish names and representations on its website, but will not publish personal information, such as telephone numbers, emails or private addresses. By submitting a representation you are accordingly confirming that you agree to this and accept responsibility for your comments.

Part B - Please write your comments in the below comment boxes. Please indicate in the left-hand column which question, paragraph number, policy or section of the document you are commenting on. Please also indicate which document your comments relate to. You may answer more than one comment in each of the boxes. This will help ensure that your response is considered correctly. Please continue on a separate page or sheet of paper if necessary.

Document name:	*e.g. Rother Local Plan, Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment* Rother Local Plan
Question number, paragraph number, policy, or section	Comments
Q6 - Q8	Wates fully supports the Council's aspirations to enhance the green credentials of development. We also, as a company, support the principle of net zero ready housing development as well as aspirations to decarbonise development. However, as the Council has recognised, the recent WMS has set out that local plans should not go beyond the highly aspirational national standards unless there are exceptional local circumstances and viability has been considered. We note that there are numerous competing elements to viability including matters such as affordable housing and BNG. We note that delivering development within Rother has been challenging with developments such as Blackfriars stalling for a significant amount of time and unable to deliver a high percentage of affordable housing. Given the significant need for affordable and older people accommodation in Rother, there needs to be a balance struck between the green requirements and the ability to deliver sufficient housing at affordable levels. As such, we recommend that this policy is simplified to set out that the Government targets will be required. We also accept that there should be an aspiration to exceed such standards either in specific locations and / or specific developments where viability has been demonstrated that these standards can be met.
Q22-Q24	Wates recognises that England is one of the most biodiversity depleted countries in the world and that step-change is required in order to reverse the decline. The Government's 10% increase in BNG, imposed through the Environment Act, will ensure that development sites will enhance biodiversity post their completion and ensure that this enhancement is managed. The Council seeks to double this requirement to 20%. We consider this approach to be unnecessary and unsound. Firstly, the Council has not assessed the viability of this approach. As noted in our response elsewhere, viability is already extremely challenging in Rother and further burden on the development industry will only lead to less development coming forward. Secondly there is no evidence that there is a specific need in Rother to enhance biodiversity by this level. As such, it is our view that the 10% minimum should be enshrined in the Local Plan. However, we accept that the Plan should be looking to go beyond this 10% and we suggest that the 10% is set out as a minimum figure with the Plan making it clear that it is envisaged that where possible and viable that this would be exceeded.

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Q51	Wates support the Council's preferred spatial development option and consider that it is sound. It is important that the Council seeks to enable the delivery of the highest number of homes possible within the constraints that are set out. It is recognised that there are significant constraints that may limit the number of homes that can be delivered, but as the Council sets out, no stone should be left unturned in terms of seeking to delivered the quantum of housing required. As such, we recognise that no one option can deliver this housing and an amalgamation of options, as set out, is most suitable. Sustainability is a central plank to the overall strategy and as such, concentrating development on brownfield sites and the most sustainable settlements is an appropriate spatial strategy. Wates notes that Battle is one of the most sustainable locations in the District with a range of services as well as good public transport connections. As such, continued development at Battle will contribute to the 20-minute neighbourhood notion. Clearly, any development would have to be located appropriately and limit the effects on the AONB whilst seeking wider improvements.
Q54	Wates has noted that the Council should be seeking to maximise the number of homes that the Plan facilitates the delivery of, and, as such, allocate as many sites as possible in order to meet this need. In doing so, the Council has to be realistic in its assumptions, but also consider the effects of infrastructure delivery and the delays that this may have (and has had historically) on delivery. As such, sites that have more limited infrastructure constraints should be prioritised, especially given the poor housing land supply position and the continued affordability challenges in the District. Wates does not wish to comment on the overall numbers at this stage, however, does consider that the Council's assessment of sites capacities may be pessimistic. For example, Wates' site at Battle could accommodate more than the 100 units set out in the Council's evidence. We recognise that there needs to be a balance between opportunities and constraints, however, given the significant housing need, significant weight should be afforded to delivery of housing. The latest affordability ratio for Rother, at 12.84 is lower than the 13.71 high at 2021, however, is still the highest in East Sussex and a significant increase over the past few years. This coupled with a a dire housing land supply position requires a significant uplift in housing delivery. The Local Plan sets out a minimum range of between 258 and 364 new homes per annum with the 258 based on no new allocations whilst the 364 figure includes potential sites (including Wates' site at Battle for 100 new homes). This figure has to be compared with the Local Plan Core Strategy figure of 335 dwellings per annum. As such, a lower figure than 335 would not realise the required ambition for growth and would not support the required housing needs for the local community. It would also affect the ability to deliver affordable housing across the District. When looking at housing completions since 2011, delivery has been significantly below even the 335 figure at 219 homes per annum (albeit, there has been an improvement recently and larger sites are likely to start delivering soon. As such, we would support the figure of at least 364 homes per annum but consider that a higher figure should be supported.

Document name:	Rother Local Plan *e.g. Rother Local Plan, Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment*
Question number, paragraph number, policy, or section Q62-Q64	Comments Wates supports the vision for Battle especially "A greater amount of sensitive growth will take place south of North Trade Road and west of Hastings Road with linked opportunities for habitat creation, restoration, enhancement and community access". Wates' site accords with the overall vision and can deliver sensitive growth in this location, enhancing local biodiversity and increasing community access. Development of the Wates site could lead to a greater number of homes than 100 whilst respecting the neighbouring habitat and enhancing it with significant buffers and tree planting proposed. In addition, the development would be sensitively located to reduce wider effects including on heritage assets. Furthermore, the site is not currently accessible to the wider public and development of the site will allow public access to a significant new area of open space as well as have potential to improve wider links. In terms of the distribution of housing, we support the notion that the greatest number of homes should be delivered at Battle, but that some development could be accommodated in surrounding villages to ensure that they continue to be viable. However, when considering the potential sites in Battle (one of which is Wates' site) additional housing could be accommodated without affecting the overall vision. As such, we would suggest that Battle is identified to accommodate at least 535 new homes over the plan period. In terms of Figure 24, the Council should ensure that all these sites continue to be deliverable. Several of these sites have been allocated for some time and have not come forward which may be an indication of challenges in bringing the sites forward. Increasing the supply from the Wates site would allow for a buffer to be included to ensure that non-delivery elsewhere does not materially affect housing delivery.
Q76	Wates supports the approach that identifies Battle as a location for greater opportunity for growth and that the settlement could accommodate more development than set out. In terms of the overall housing numbers, these do not meet the standard method figure and every effort should be done to close this gap. The Council should also look into the windfall figures as including windfalls from 23/24 is double counting with sites that already have planning permission. Generally, across the country windfalls only start counting from either year three or four, so there is likely to be a reduction in the overall supply.

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Q77	Wates do not support the notion of a stepped trajectory for three main reasons. Firstly, the majority of the sites are already identified as having permission and / or allocations and therefore can come forward early in the plan period. Secondly, allocations coming forward, such as the Wates site, are deliverable and can come forward in the first five years of the plan. Finally, there is significant housing need now and pushing delivery to the end of the plan period will not solve the really challenging housing conditions and deliver housing for people that need it now.
Q80	Whilst we understand the Council's aspirations for comprehensive development there are many cases where land interests and timings do not align so that one party seeks to progress a planning application in advance of a separate party. As such, a requirement for comprehensive masterplanning cannot be enforced but should be set out as an aspiration. In addition, the requirement for a masterplan at the outline stage of an application which "must set the vision and implementation strategy for the entire site and propose parameters relating to the scale and layout of development, mix of uses, affordable housing, sustainable transport and access; green infrastructure (including sustainable drainage and biodiversity net gain) and other infrastructure (secured directly or through funding contributions)" goes well beyond national legislation on such matters and, in many cases, would not be able to be complied with. Furthermore, the requirement to comply with other policies is superfluous. As such,we would suggest the policy DEV2 is removed from the plan.
Q114	Wates appreciate the need to provide balanced and mixed communities, however, does not agree that a prescriptive minimum percentage of 1 and 2-bed market units would be an appropriate policy. Whilst the overall need is for 30% 1 and 2 bed units, some sites will deliver a significant higher percentage of these, whilst other sites would not be suitable to accommodate such need. Indeed, given that this is market housing, it is for the market to determine the overall mix, rather than trying to influence market forces. The policy current drafted may lead to significant over-delivery of smaller units and may undermine the viability of schemes.
Q131	Whilst Wates recognises the need for older people accommodation, it very strongly objects to a requirement to deliver at least 10% of housing on sites over 100 units. This approach is simply undeliverable and is not supported by the market (no developer will deliver and maintain only 10 units as part of a wider scheme). An approach to deliver care on larger site (over 500 units) has been accepted elsewhere and it is this scale of development that may accommodate alternative accommodation.

Document name:	e.g. Rother Local Plan, Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment
Question number, paragraph number, policy, or section BAT0014	Comments Response to comments can be found on pages 22 and 23 of the Vision Document that accompanies this response

Should you require further space to respond to make comments please continue on a separate page or sheet of paper as necessary.

Part C: Equalities Monitoring Survey

We want to be able to engage with as many different groups as possible in the development of the Local Plan. The following questions will help us to get a picture of which groups we are successful in engaging with, while also showing us where we are being less successful. This will help us to ensure that our Planning Policy consultations can reach more people in the future.

Please answer the questions below by ticking the boxes that you feel most describes you. Some questions may feel personal, but any information that you give will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be used only to help us to improve our services. It will not be linked to you as an individual. You do not have to fill this in, but it will help us if you do.

1. **Where in the district do you live?** (Please state which town, village, or nearest settlement)

…….

Or Do not live in Rother ☐ (Please mark or tick if applicable)

2. **What is your age?** (Please mark or tick)

17 and under ☐ 18-24 ☐ 25-34 ☐ 35-44 ☐ 45-54 ☐
55-64 ☐ 65-74 ☐ 75-84 ☐ 85 and over ☐

3. A**re you?** (Please mark or tick if applicable)

Male ☐
Female ☐
Transgender/Transexual ☐

Identify another way (please write in): …….