



BUCKHOLT FARM

LAND EAST OF WATERMILL LANE (North), BEXHILL-ON-SEA



RURBAN ESTATES

VISION DOCUMENT

Rother DC Regulation 18, July 2024

OUR VISION

'The vision for the Site is to deliver a high quality, locally distinctive and sustainable addition to Bexhill-on-Sea.

The new proposals will provide much needed market and affordable housing, generous public open spaces, recreation and play areas, enhanced areas of biodiversity and community infrastructure including new planting, play space and recreational routes.'

PROJECT TEAM:

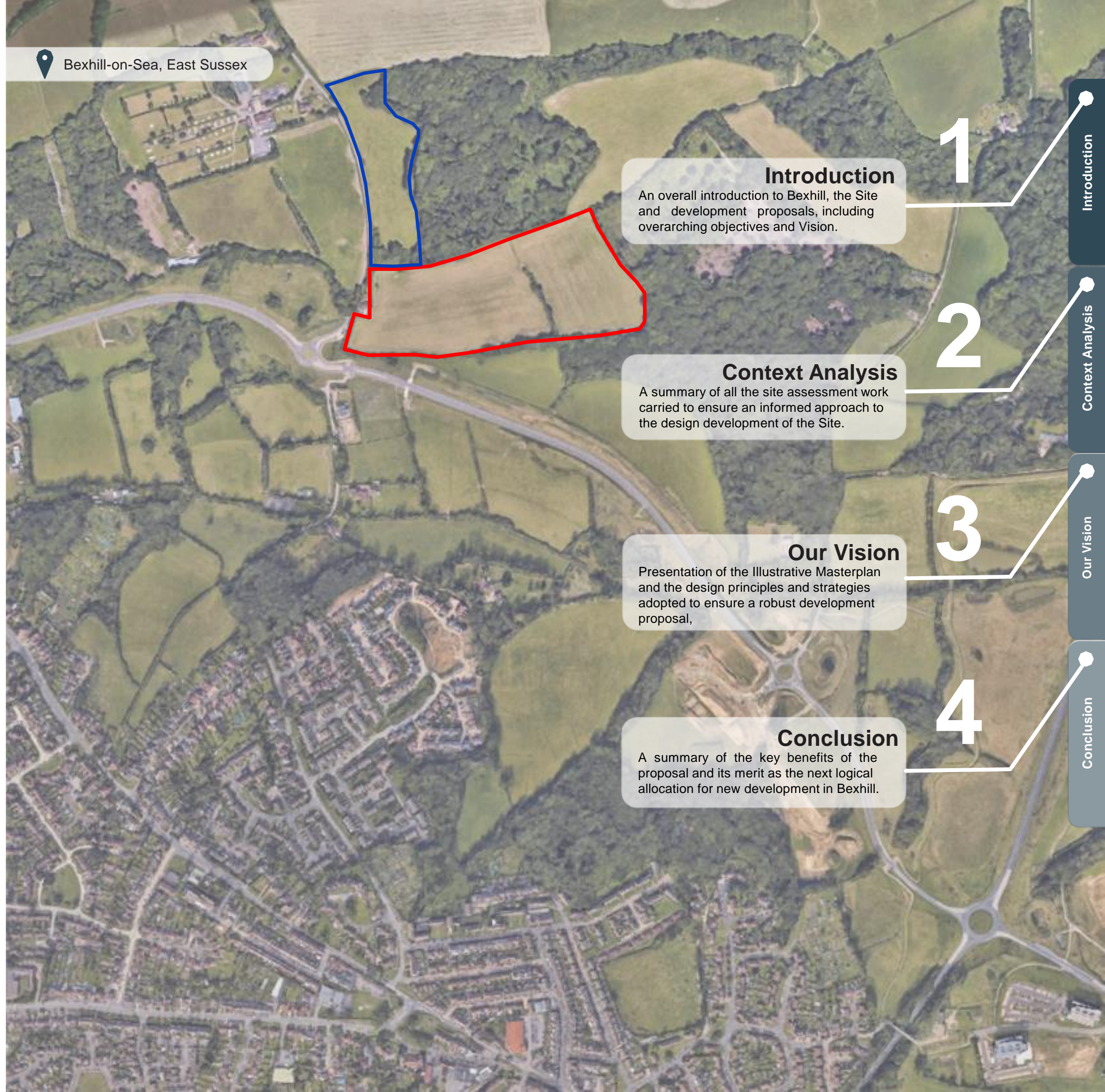


RURBAN ESTATES



LDĀDESIGN

Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex



1 Introduction

An overall introduction to Bexhill, the Site and development proposals, including overarching objectives and Vision.

2 Context Analysis

A summary of all the site assessment work carried to ensure an informed approach to the design development of the Site.

3 Our Vision

Presentation of the Illustrative Masterplan and the design principles and strategies adopted to ensure a robust development proposal.

4 Conclusion

A summary of the key benefits of the proposal and its merit as the next logical allocation for new development in Bexhill.

Introduction

Context Analysis

Our Vision

Conclusion

Introduction

We are delighted to bring forward land east of Watermill Lane, Bexhill-on-Sea for residential development to Rother District Council.

The plan opposite identifies its location. This greenfield farmland site is approximately 8.88 hectares and is influenced by existing residential allocations in the immediate vicinity, and the new infrastructure that has come forward in North Bexhill over the last decade. The site is bound by Watermill Lane to its west, greenfield land and Haven Brook Avenue to its South and ancient woodland to its eastern and northern boundaries. An existing PROW crosses the site and runs along the northern boundary of the lower field.

The proposals set out in this document have been informed by in depth site analysis including technical input from landscape consultancy LDA, heritage expertise from Pegasus, urban design masterplanning expertise from EdgeUD and with overarching planning input from DHA Planning.

Proposals will promote good contextual design, aligning with the design guidance documents from Rother District Council.

In order to highlight the benefits of this Site, this Vision Document sets out our key aims and objectives for the site.

The Vision Document aims to:

- Present our understanding of how future housing needs could be met, and why we feel this Site has a role to play;
- Identify the characteristics of the Site;
- Present our proposals and emerging concept for the Site, and an illustrative masterplan
- Set out why we think the Site should be allocated in the emerging Local Plan.

Land West of Watermill Lane, Bexhill-on-Sea can deliver the following:



Approximately 130 new, high quality family homes with a range of sizes, types and tenures.



Children's natural play space, promoting outdoor activity and cognitive learning.



New footpaths within the Site, connecting to the existing context.



Enhanced boundary planting, woodland buffers and creation of meaningful open green spaces for recreational use.



Enhanced biodiversity features to provide new habitats and protect existing features.



Contributions to local community improvements and the provision of a potential community use building on site.



2

Contextual Analysis

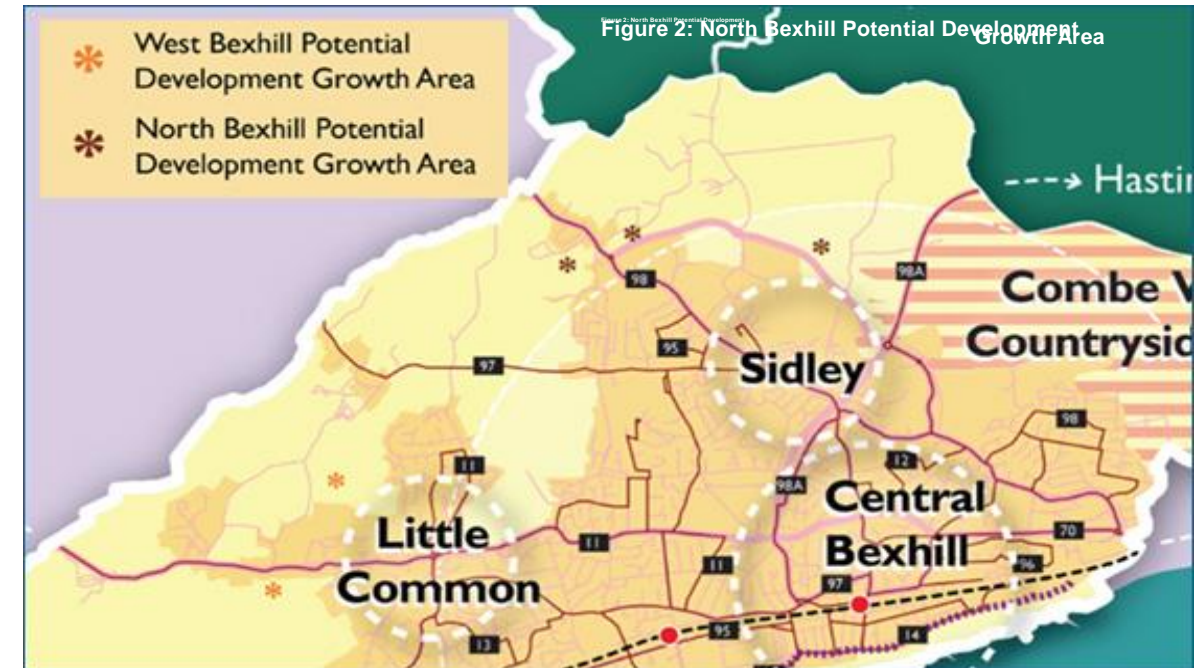
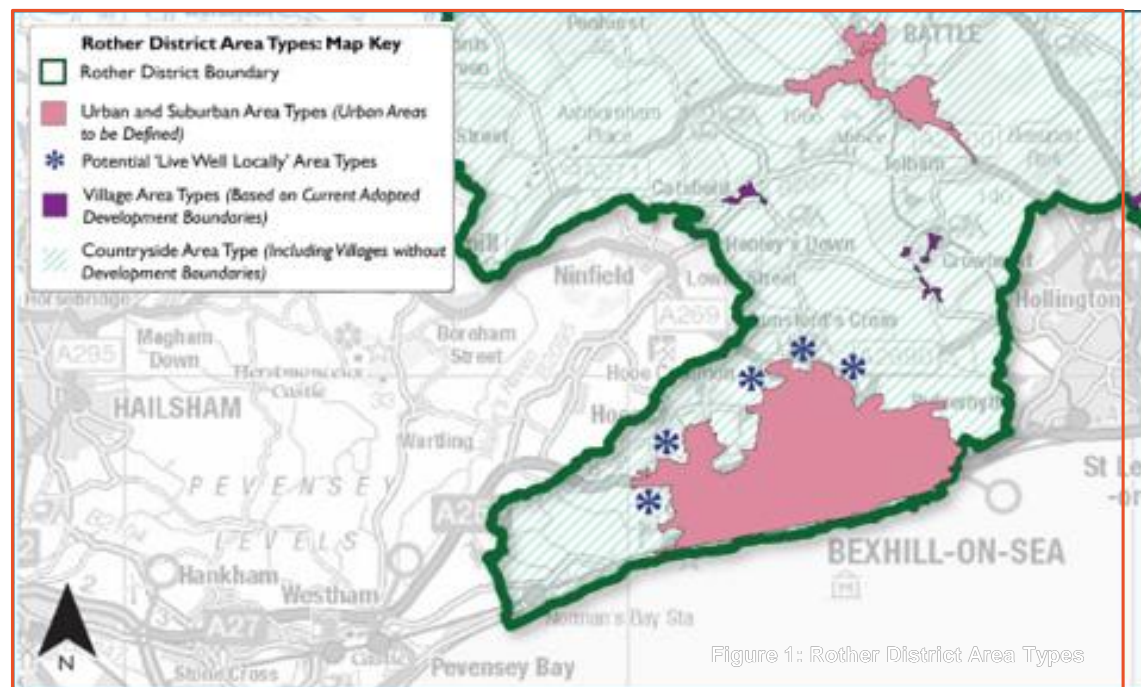
Planning Policy Context

The Site falls within the administrative area of Rother District Council (RDC) and on the edge of the settlement of Bexhill which is by far the largest settlement within the district. The 2014 Core Strategy directed growth to Bexhill in reflection of its position as the most sustainable settlement within the district and to promote economic development.

RDC is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan to set out a strategy for development across the district for the period to 2040 and is seeking views on the overall spatial strategy, the vision and objectives, its supporting evidence base documents and any of the Plan's draft policies, through a Regulation 18 public consultation exercise. The draft plan's vision is that "bold solutions will have successfully addressed the climate and biodiversity emergencies and the housing crisis." These are translated into two Overall Priorities: "Green to the Core" which means considering the impact of all planning decisions on the climate emergency, the

biodiversity crisis and the High Weald National Landscape, and "Live Well Locally." The latter means considering the goal of creating healthy, sustainable communities, supporting residents in terms of access to jobs, services and facilities, connected and compact neighbourhoods and new places that foster a sense of belonging, identity and shared experience. Figure 1 within the draft Local Plan indicates that the site falls within a potential "Live Well Locally" area.

The Site is in close proximity of a number of committed and planned developments, many of which were allocated as development sites through the 2019 Development and Site Allocations Development Plan Document (the DaSA). The Site is also in close proximity to the new road, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure built in North Bexhill over the last decade, including the controlled signalled crossing connecting to Watermill Lane (South of Haven Brook Avenue) and the PROW's/footways which are to be upgraded



pursuant to the planning obligations of committed development to the South. It should also be noted that two new bus stops are secured as part of these committed developments, within less than 100 metres of the subject site entrance.

The emerging Local Plan will be underpinned by a new evidence base which includes a Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA), published in April 2024, which assesses the site under reference BEX0164 and under the description 'Land east of Watermill Lane (North), Bexhill.' In summary it is identified as 'potentially suitable' but noting 'unknown' availability with an 'estimated development potential' of 30 units. It is not clear how the estimation of 30 units has been arrived at.

Rother's proposed development strategy has been split into five spatial sub-areas, each with their own vision statement and identified distribution of development.

Bexhill is identified as the key focus for sustainable growth, within the urban area on brownfield sites and at its edges through 'live well locally' urban extensions on greenfield sites. The proposed strategy seeks to locate development on the northern and western

edges of the built-up area of Bexhill to create new compact, connected communities. BEX0164 is situated within the North Bexhill Potential Development Growth Area, as shown in Figure 2 within the draft Local Plan.

The Site is considered to comprise a logical extension to the already allocated sites in northern Bexhill, served well by the new road infrastructure in this part of the town. Rurban Estates have a legal interest in the site and this reflects the landowner's willingness to make the land available for development. For the reasons set out within this Vision Document, the site has the potential for a sustainable development capable of providing in the region of 130 homes. At this quantum of development, there are no known viability issues, and there are no legal or third-party constraints present that should preclude the site being allocated for development. It is envisaged that BEX0164 can provide a logical phased extension to north Bexhill and come forward within years the first 5 years of the plan.



RR/2023/1706/P
Outline application for 5 dwellings
Refused

RR/2021/1059/P
Outline application for 32 dwellings
Pending

RR/2022/2545/P
Outline application for 250 dwellings
Pending

RR/2021/2545/P
Outline application for 80 dwellings
Pending

Site RTHR469
Site allocated for housing within Local Plan

RR/2017/2441/P
Full application for 139 dwellings
Granted planning

RR/2023/129/P
Outline application for 5 dwellings
Refused

RR/2022/1584/P
Outline application for 130 dwellings
Pending

RR/2013/2166/P
Outline application for 474 dwellings
Granted Planning

RR/2022/2131/P
Full application for 89 dwellings
Pending

Site RTHR5
Site allocated for housing within Local Plan

Highwoods Golf Course

Bexhill Academy

Sidley Recreation Ground

Site Constraints and Opportunities

The site is greenfield farmland located to the east of Watermill Lane. All edges of the site are defined by existing field boundaries marked by scrub, hedgerow and/or trees which act to partially screen and contain the site. To the north and east, the site is bound by an area of Ancient Woodland. A Public Right of Way connecting Watermill Lane to Buckholt Lane runs along the length of the northern boundary of the lower field.

An existing overgrown gate off Watermill Lane, beside the PROW stile provides the existing access for pedestrians, and historically the access used for agricultural purposes. The field wraps an existing detached property on its western boundary, Cockerels Farmhouse, a Grade II listed heritage asset. Further south lies an additional agricultural field in third party ownership, and Haven Brook Avenue.

A summary of the technical evidence and analysis is summarised here and on the following pages, concluding with a Constraints and Opportunities plan on pages 14-15.

Ecology

Existing hedgerows and trees on site are to be retained as much as possible to ensure a landscape led scheme and a 10%+ net gain in biodiversity.

Flood Risk and Drainage

The Site falls within flood zone 1 (low risk) according to the latest Environment Agency data and is therefore suitable for residential development.

There is little evidence of surface water flooding on Site. An existing ditch runs on a North-South axis adjacent to a hedgerow on the lower field. SuDS features can be incorporated into a landscape led scheme to work harmoniously with the existing surface water drainage of the site and to ensure that the surrounding area will be free from surface water flooding.

Noise

Noise is not considered to be a constraint to development. Haven Brook Avenue beyond the southern boundary is likely to be the main noise source, however effects are expected to be relatively localised and limited.

Archaeology and Heritage

There are considered to be no archaeological constraints to development. The nearest and only heritage asset of significance to be considered is that of the Grade II Listed Cockerels Farmhouse to the North of the proposed site access. Pegasus Heritage have provided input into the Opps/Constraints and overarching masterplan and their recommendations summarised as follows:

- Siting access sufficiently south of the house to provide for planting north of the road where closest to the listed building, to filter views.
- Set back of built form from the western area of the site closest to the Listed Building.
- Retention of agricultural character to immediate vicinity of Listed Building, as meadow/orchard.

Peagusus' recommendations have been adopted and in doing so, it is considered that the residential development of the site and the provision of the access would result in only less than substantial harm at the lower end of the spectrum and, as such, matters relating to built heritage are not considered to represent a constraint to development.

Landscape

The Site is well-vegetated, comprising prevalent and established vegetation along its boundaries and within its internal field pattern. Overall the site is visually enclosed by several natural features, and views to it are generally confined to its immediate context. While physically separated, the Site is influenced by both nearby urban and rural areas. With committed development south of Haven Brook Avenue, the Site forms part of an evolving landscape; with consideration of the Site and its context, the allocated/consented sites south will, in particular, influence the character and visual environment of the Site's immediate surroundings.

No statutory or non statutory designated landscapes are identified. The High Weald National Landscape located approximately 1.6km to the Site's North. There are no likely effects arising from the proposed development on the special qualities and natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape.



View of Cockerels Farmhouse, looking south from PROW



Existing overgrown gate and PROW stile off Watermill Lane



Views from the site looking South towards land allocated for housing in the foreground, and existing development beyond



Existing road and pedestrian infrastructure between proposed site entrance and Haven Brook Avenue



Existing containment of Eastern field, screened by existing trees and vegetation to be retained



Views from within the site looking South-West over land allocated for development, with existing development beyond

Access & Movement

A review of the existing local pedestrian, cycle and public transport infrastructure (together with improvements secured pursuant to committed development to the south) has demonstrated that the site is afforded the opportunity for many everyday journeys to take place by active and sustainable travel modes, with a range of local services and facilities located within a reasonable walking and cycling distance in Sidley and Bexhill-on-Sea. There are also opportunities to further enhance this infrastructure as part of the implementation of the proposed development.

Vehicular access to the site can be achieved by way of a new priority junction with Watermill Lane, which can demonstrate adequate visibility splays, as informed by an Automatic Traffic Count survey. The access will also incorporate a 2.0m wide pedestrian footway on its southern side, which will link to the existing pedestrian and cycle infrastructure on Watermill Lane and Haven Brook Avenue. The technical design of the junction, as drawn by DHA Transport engineers, confirm that there are no technical impediments to the delivery of the access.

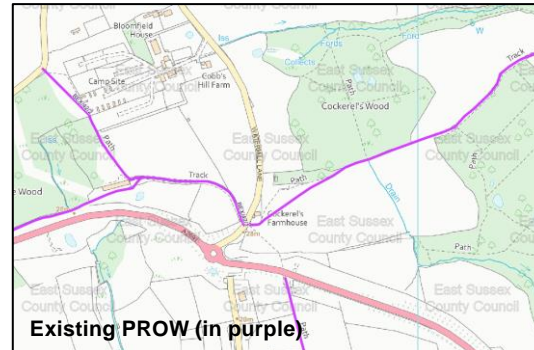
The design of the internal site layout is also important to the uptake of active and sustainable travel modes. To this end, the street network will prioritise non-car modes at every opportunity, with wide, direct, landscaped and well-surveilled walking and cycling routes along principal route corridors and shared surfaces and 'home zones' within lightly trafficked areas. The existing PRow route that crosses the site will also be maintained and enhanced to promote walking for utility as well as leisure purposes.



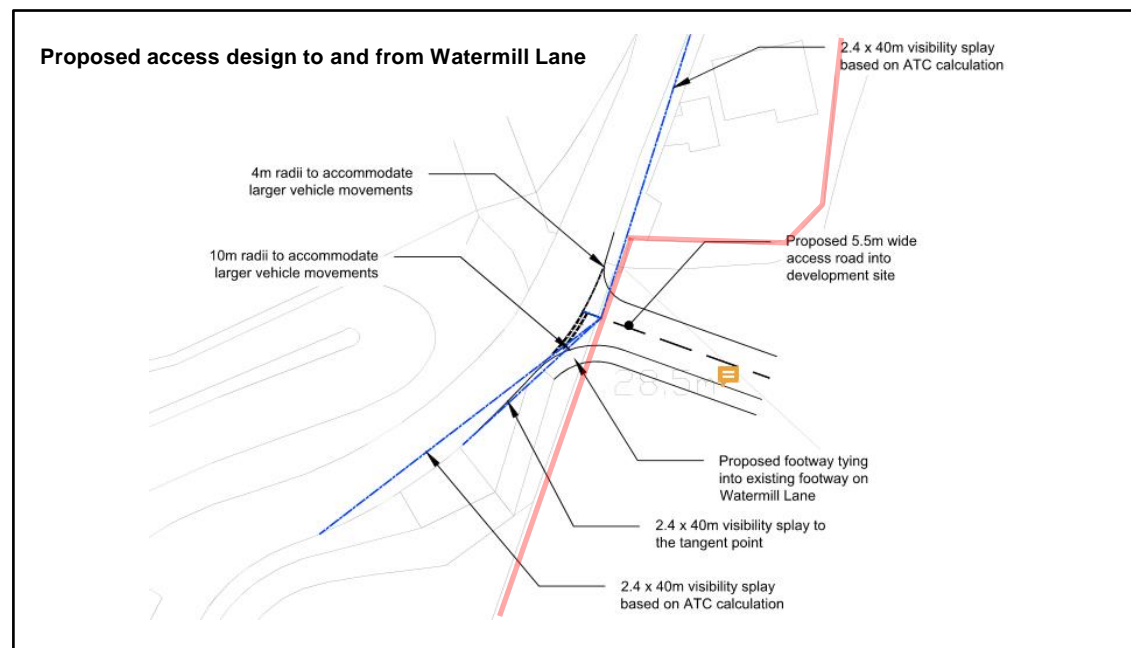
Proposed access point from Ninfield Road



Existing cycle way (in blue)



Existing PRow (in purple)



View looking East from the Haven Brook Avenue roundabout towards the signalised crossing



Context Analysis

View looking South from the signalised crossing towards Watermill Lane (South)





Cobbs Hill Farm

Watermill Lane

Cockrels Wood

HELAA Site:
BEX0165
Rejected

HELAA Site:
BEX0163

HELAA Site:
BEX0003

HELAA Site:
BEX0115

A2691

A2691

40

- Site boundary (715ha)
HELAA: BEX0164
- Land within same ownership
- Public rights of way (PRoW)
- Proposed diversion of PRoW
- Proposed diverted section of PRoW
- Informal footpaths
- Surface water flooding
- Existing trees/hedgerows to be retained (where possible)
- Ancient woodland (with 15m buffer)
- Residential boundaries
- Existing speed limits
- Listed buildings
- Proposed access point
- Proposed new bus stops adjacent to equestrian crossing
- Potential primary street network
- Footpath connecting PRoWs
- Potential recreational route
- Existing pedestrian access
- Proposed future pedestrian/cycle connection
- Proposed pedestrian/cycle route
- Proposed area for community use
- Proposed residential development opportunities
366ha @ up to 35dph = 128 homes
- Proposed green space
- Proposed planting for woodland buffer
- Proposed planting for buffer to listed building
- Proposed meadow / orchard
- Proposed green corridor
- Indicative area reserved for attenuation
- Existing pond
- Existing ditches
- 11-33v High voltage electric cable proposed to be undergrounded (2m easment either side)
- Sites identified in the HELAA 2024 draft assessment
- Proposed area for play
- Area reserved for biodiversity enhancement and recreational use.

Context Analysis

3

Cobbs Hill Farm

OUR VISION

Our Vision

The Site provides an opportunity to deliver approximately 130 new homes set within a strong and mature landscape framework. Green and blue corridors protect and enhance existing tree lines and hedgerows, linking to a variety of open spaces for new residents and the surrounding community to enjoy. The landscaped site edges are enhanced with multifunctional green spaces drawing landscape into the heart of the Site.

A well-connected network of routes for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles will link the Site to the existing network of footpaths and streets, to create a highly legible and accessible extension to the neighbourhood. Routes will be designed to promote walking and cycling above the car, with connections to public transport encouraging healthy lifestyles and sustainable travel. All homes will be within easy reach of a variety of open spaces on their doorstep.



HELAA Site: BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENTS



NEW HOMES



SUSTAINABLE URBAN DRAINAGE



PROMOTING ACTIVE TRAVEL



SPACE FOR PLAY WITHIN NATURE



- Site boundary (715ha) HELAA: BEX0164
- Land Within Same Ownership
- ♥ Community Uses & Play
- ♥ Proposed area reserved for biodiversity and recreational use.
- ♥ Proposed Meadow / Orchard
- Vehicular Gateway
- Pedestrian Gateway
- ↔ Landscape Corridors (for habitat connectivity)
- Proposed Residential Parcels
- Existing PRowS & future routes
- Proposed Diversion of PRow
- - - Proposed Recreational Routes
- Vehicular Movement

Cockrels Wood

Cole Wood

Landscape corridors through the Site will accommodate new planting and drainage as a defining natural feature supporting the existing habitats as well as protecting views from within and outside of the Site.

A primary street meanders through the Site to provide access to new homes as part of a network of safe and pedestrian friendly streets and routes. Areas for play and recreation are incorporated within the landscape, with a variety of leisure routes connecting homes to the play space and landscaped areas.

The proposals will deliver a variety of new homes in a range of sizes and tenures with a character that respects the local vernacular. The density proposed varies across the Site respecting topography and settlement pattern. A range of homes would be delivered with a balance of tenures and size in accordance with local policy to meet local needs.

4

Conclusion

Benefits of the proposal

This document has set out a Vision for the development of the land east of Watermill Lane (North), as a logical allocation for development in north Bexhill.

The Site has been analysed through technical investigations, site visits and desktop study to understand its constraints and opportunities and to realise the potential of the Site in delivering a sustainable residential led development.

The illustrative masterplan presents one way in which the Site could be delivered. Proposals respect and enhance the existing natural features of the Site, creating new homes set within a mature and varied landscape.

- Bexhill-on-Sea is a sustainable location and should make a contribution towards meeting future housing needs;
- Land east of Watermill Lane avoids more sensitive areas around the District including those in the High Weald National Landscape (formerly AONB) and is well related to existing infrastructure, together with already allocated and committed development sites south of Haven Brook Avenue.
- The land is free of significant constraints and suitable for development of around 130 dwellings;
- The proposals can accommodate attractive open spaces, provide for community use and habitat creation to deliver 10%+ biodiversity net gain; and
- A masterplan has been prepared to show how an attractive residential area could be delivered, with space for recreation and with strong accessibility links to existing services within the settlement.

The Site east of Watermill Lane (North) can deliver the following benefits:



Approximately 130 new, high quality family homes with a range of sizes, types and tenures.



Children's natural play space, promoting outdoor activity and cognitive learning.



New footpaths within the Site, connecting into the existing context and the proposed upgrades secured in respect of consents/allocations South of Haven Brook Avenue.



Enhanced boundary planting, woodland buffers and creation of meaningful open, green spaces.



Enhanced biodiversity features to provide new habitats and protect existing features.



Contributions to local community improvements and the potential provision of a community use building on site.



Conclusion



RURBAN ESTATES