

SUBMISSION TO HELAA 23RD July 2024 regarding ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL DRAFT HOUSING AND ECONOMIC LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT (HELAA) PART 2: SITE ASSESSMENTS CHAPTER 4: RYE AND THE EASTERN SETTLEMENTS CLUSTER DOCUMENT

Site id: IDE0010

Street Field is a single piece of agricultural land abutting Main Street Iden of approximately 0.69 hectares identified as IDE0021. It is deeply disappointing that the ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL DRAFT HOUSING AND ECONOMIC LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT (HELAA) PART 2: SITE ASSESSMENTS CHAPTER 4: RYE AND THE EASTERN SETTLEMENTS CLUSTER DOCUMENT of April 2024, has identified part of Street Field - the portion of land **IDE0010** [hereinafter identified by us as **Street Field West**]- as 'potentially available' for the development of 10 dwellings along Main Street Iden, by the year 2028. In this submission, we wish to register a number of objections to the proposal set out in **IDE0010**.

2. We begin our submission by stating our full support for the government's desire to accelerate the building of new houses across the country, in particular of 'affordable houses'. This is an admirable policy. As will become clear in our submission however, we have serious concerns where new housing development is proposed without any, or any sufficient provision of the necessary infrastructure (local job opportunities, medical and education facilities, public transport, energy provision ad so on) essential to make sense of and therefore to justify any particular new housing development.

3. For many years, Iden Parish Council has submitted local plans to Rother District Council which specifically rule out any development of the agricultural land East of Main Street, because there has been a strong desire for Iden to remain one of those increasingly rare villages that retains its rural heritage. Although we accept that development policy can (and sometimes must) change to reflect new housing priorities, the Iden Parish Council position has been strongly supported in the past by Rother District Council, for example in the **RDC Development and Site Allocation Local Plan dated 16 December 2019 (DaSa)**. In this document it is stated 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 [11.133].

4. **IDEOO21** states as follows.

This is a gently sloping, open field at the southern end of the village, forming part of a wider fieldscape which extends into open countryside to the east. It is bordered by short terraces of cottages, including several grade II listed buildings on its south-eastern and south-western boundaries. It has a substantial roadside hedge on its boundary with Main Street and a field access. The western part of the field [*Street Field West*] is assessed separately as IDEO010. While this separate section could potentially be suitable for a short terrace of small houses fronting Main Street, development into the remainder of the field would not be appropriate as this would be out of keeping with and harmful to the settlement pattern and the rural setting of the village within the countryside of the National Landscape, and could harm the setting of the adjacent listed buildings.

5. Having explained with solid reasoning why **Street Field** is generally unsuitable for development, the document reaches the opposite conclusion regarding the western portion of the field. **Street Field West**. This approach reads as disingenuous and inherently contradictory.

IDEOO10: The site forms the western section of a gently sloping open field at the southern end of the village, forming part of a wider fieldscape which extends into open countryside to the east. It is bordered by a short terrace of cottages, including grade II listed buildings, on its southern boundary. It has a substantial roadside hedge on its boundary with Main Street and a field access. The site could be suitable for a short terrace of small houses fronting Main Street, which would continue the adjoining ribbon development northwards. This is subject to the retention of as much of the roadside hedge as possible, allowing for an access and footway. Any development would need to be of an appropriate high quality design in order to respect the setting of adjacent listed buildings and the rural setting of the village within the High Weald National Landscape. Initial Highway Authority comments suggest that sightlines would need to be

increased by the cutting back of vegetation, and a footway provided outside the site.

6. Observations:

- Iden is a small village of c. 450 residents, situated in an area of outstanding natural beauty adjoining/near Romney Marsh. It has many Grade II listed properties clustered around the proposed development site, of which several date back to the 16th century. Listed building property owners are legally bound to maintain the status of these buildings, which form part of the character of the area. Owners are prevented from altering or extending any part of these listed buildings unless fully compliant with stringent planning requirements, which have been designed to maintain the vernacular appearance and historic character of the area in which they are situated. It would be perverse and counter intuitive for the Rother District Council to support this proposed 'ribbon housing extension' in the centre of this cluster of listed buildings, a development that would most likely alter the character of the village for ever. Visitors regularly comment on the wonderful experience of arriving at Iden from the more urbanised settlements at Playden, Rye Foreign and Peasmarsh. They feel they have entered a rural gem where one can stop at the gate entrance to Street Field to admire the scene of grazing sheep with lambs etc. Rother District Council reflects this observation at 11.129 to 11.131 of the DaSa [see supra para. 3].
- **IDEOO10** suggests that this potential site 'could be suitable for a short terrace of 10 small houses fronting Main Street, which would continue the adjoining ribbon development northward'. This so-called 'ribbon development' i, in fact a cluster of four charming 1850s cottages, quite unsuitable to be annexed to any modern 'ribbon development'. Suggesting the roadside hedge 'should be retained as much as possible' is a fantasy. This ancient hedge would disappear under a footway which itself would abut a busy and relatively narrow highway.
- Iden is part of the HELAA Eastern Developments Cluster of 12 communities, all of which rely heavily on Rye for schools and medical support. At present, although the Medical Centre provides excellent care,

such is existing demand that routine GP appointments are offered one month ahead, which many people feel is unacceptable. The proposed new site will only increase this problem and offers no collateral solution.

- Iden has no mains gas. The existing houses rely either on oil, wood burning stoves or expensive electric alternatives. There are no sustainable inexpensive alternatives yet available to the public in Britain, other than air source heat pumps. The HELAA proposal does not address this issue in any coherent way. The increased pressure on fragile water supplies and sewage disposal systems that the proposed development would inevitably generate, is also not accounted for in the proposal.
- There is already a considerable amount of through traffic frequently flouting the speed limits in Main St, Iden. The proposed new development abutting Main St would inevitably lead to a significant increase in motor traffic with concomitant danger to life, and further environmental destruction occasioned by the arrival of c. 20 more residential motor vehicles, increased pressure generally on limited parking options, an increase in local delivery vehicles and so on.
- Iden has a strong public commitment to maintaining its status as a Dark Sky Area which helps enhance its special rural qualities. The amount of lighting associated with any such development on **Street Field West** would completely undermine and effectively bring to an end this commitment.

We wish to register our objection to this proposal.

Jeremy Cooper and Clare Picking,

