

Planning Policy  
Rother District Council  
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London  
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[nexusplanning.co.uk](https://www.nexusplanning.co.uk)

13 March 2026

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: Rother District Local Plan HELAA - 'Call for Sites'**

We write on behalf of our Client, Devine Homes, in response to Rother District Councils HELAA 'Call for Sites' exercise to promote **Land at Bishops Lane, Salehurst, Robertsbridge, TN32 5BX** for allocation for residential development in the emerging Rother Local Plan.

This site is available, suitable and achievable to deliver high-quality residential development, contributing new market and affordable homes, public open spaces and land to support biodiversity enhancement. The site located in a sustainable location, adjacent to and between the existing development boundaries of the settlement of Robertsbridge.

The Site is shown on plan reference 20210-S101 (Site Location Plan).

**Devine Homes**

Devine Homes is an experienced housebuilder based in Surrey, delivering distinctive, high-quality homes across South East England. With over 30 years of experience, Devine has built a reputation for innovative design, thoughtful construction and a commitment to individuality.

Building between 50 and 100 homes each year, Devine Homes' portfolio ranges from bespoke houses to family homes and premium apartments. Each of their developments demonstrate a focus on quality, design sensitivity and 'kerb appeal', ensuring homes complement their surroundings while offering modern, well-considered interiors with enduring traditional qualities.

**The site being promoted for allocation in the Plan**

Two parcels of land are being promoted for allocation within the Rother District Local Plan. Together, they form a single development opportunity located within Robertsbridge, as shown below in Figure 1.



*Figure 1 – Site Location*

The site comprises two adjoining fields within the Darwell Stream Valley. A watercourse runs along the northern boundary, with established vegetation along both the northern and southern edges. A hedgerow, identified as a historic field boundary, subdivides the site through its centre.

The site lies within the High Weald Area National Landscape, a designation covering approximately 1,500 km<sup>2</sup> across Kent, Sussex and Surrey. The site represents a very small proportion of this extensive landscape, within which the majority of Rother District and the entirety of Robertsbridge are situated.

The site is not within a Conservation Area. The nearest listed building is The Ostrich Hotel, a Grade II listed building located approximately 190 metres to the north.

The site includes areas within Flood Zones 1, 2 and 3, as defined by the Environment Agency. The proposed built development would be confined to the part of the site that lies in Flood Zone 1, which represents the lowest risk of flooding.

The site is well related to existing development. Residential properties lie along the south, south-eastern and north-eastern boundaries, within the current Robertsbridge Development Boundary. These comprise a mix of terraced, semi-detached and detached dwellings arranged in an informal pattern. To the north lies designated open space and recreational land, including the village hall and allotments.

Robertsbridge railway station is located to the north-west of the site, and Salehurst Church of England Primary School lies approximately 200 metres to the north-east.

## Site Planning History

A planning application was submitted in May 2022 by Nexus Planning, on behalf of Devine Homes (LPA reference RR/2022/1379/P), for the development of the Site to provide 41 new dwellings, including 39% affordable housing, together with associated landscaping, amenity space, parking and the provision of public open space.

The application followed pre-application engagement with the Local Planning Authority. During the determination process, a number of revisions were made in response to consultation feedback received post-submission, with particular regard to the relationship between the development and the High Weald National Landscape.

These revisions included a reduction in the number of dwellings proposed (from 44 to 41), amendments to the site layout, and refinements to the design of the landscaping and dwellings to better reflect the landscape context. A copy of the revised site plan can be found within Figure 2 below.



*Figure 2 – Revised Proposed Layout, ref. RR/2022/1379/P*

Following these changes, no objections were raised by either the Council's Landscape Officer or the High Weald National Landscape Partnership to the planning application. The Council's officers subsequently recommended the application for approval, subject to conditions and the completion of a Section 106 legal agreement.

Notwithstanding this positive recommendation, the Council’s Planning Committee unfortunately resolved to refuse planning permission. Given the positive officer recommendation, the applicant is reviewing appeal options. In any event however, the Council’s principal concern related the loss of some hedgerow to provide an access into the site from Bishops Lane and the perceived resulting harm to the landscape.

This concern is no impediment to the Council allocating the site for residential development through the Local Plan because an alternative access strategy could be developed, if required. The Council, through the planning application, raised no concerns as to the principle of developing the site for housing. Matters of detail, such as the location of the site access could be resolved and agreed at planning application stage following the allocation of the site.

### Salehurst and Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Plan

This site was also promoted for allocation within the Salehurst and Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Development Plan (SRNDP).

Whilst the site was not specifically allocated within that Plan, the site was assessed as being accessible and sustainable owing to its relationship with the settlement of Robertsbridge.

It is highly relevant however, that the Neighbourhood Examining Inspector explicitly identified the site as one that should be considered for allocation / development in the event that an alternative site in Robertsbridge, ‘Hodson’s Mill’, did not come forward for development. That site has not delivered homes despite planning permission having been granted (LPA ref. RR/2017/382/P), which has now expired. This reinforces the position that this site should be allocated for residential development because other sites in the parish are, evidently, not apparently deliverable.

### Assessment Criteria

We have described below the Land at Bishop’s Lane site meet the requirements for allocation in the emerging Rother Local Plan.

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| <b>Available</b> | The Site is actively promoted by Devine Homes on behalf of, and with the support of, the landowners. It has been promoted for housing allocation for over 10 years through Local and Neighbourhood Plan processes, alongside the submission of a planning application. There are no constraints that would limit the Site’s availability for development within the early stages of the Local Plan period, and it can therefore be considered available.   |
| <b>Suitable</b>  | <p>The Site is sustainably located immediately adjacent to the existing settlement boundary of Robertsbridge. Residential development lies along the southern, south-eastern and north-eastern boundaries, within the defined Robertsbridge Development Boundary. The surrounding built form comprises a mix of terraced, semi-detached and detached dwellings arranged in an informal layout, reflecting the established character of the settlement. To the north, the Site is bounded by designated open space and recreational land, including the village hall and allotments.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that the Site lies within the High Weald Area National Landscape, which covers approximately 1,500 km<sup>2</sup> across Kent, Sussex and Surrey. The Site represents a very</p> |

small and contained parcel within this extensive designation, within which the majority of Rother District and the entirety of Robertsbridge are located. Any future development would therefore need to respond sensitively to its landscape context, an approach that can be appropriately addressed through the design process. This has been demonstrated through the design of application ref. RR/2022/1379/P, which received no objection from the Landscape Officer, or High Weald National Landscape Partnership Officer. Whilst concern was raised by the Council with regard the loss of some hedgerow and the localised landscape effects of the planning application scheme, these are resolvable through detailed design and should not be no impediment to the allocation of the site for residential development.

Devine Homes has undertaken extensive early engagement with specialist technical consultants to inform the development of the Site. This work has identified no technical or environmental constraints that would preclude development or render the Site unsuitable for allocation.

There are no known physical, technical or legal constraints that would prevent the Site from being delivered within the Plan period. The Site is available now and capable of being brought forward in a timely manner.

**Achievable**

Devine Homes is an established and experienced housebuilder with a strong track record of delivering high quality residential development. The company is committed to continued engagement with the Council to progress the Site and ensure its delivery, making a positive contribution to meeting housing needs within the District.

**Summary**

We are pleased to promote this Site for a residential allocation within the emerging Rother District Local Plan. The evidence submitted demonstrates that the Site is available, suitable and achievable, and that it offers a valuable opportunity to deliver a high quality new homes that would make a meaningful contribution to identified local housing needs in a highly sustainable location.

We welcome the opportunity to comment on the emerging Rother District Local Plan and look forward to the publication of the Regulation 19 Draft. We would also welcome further engagement with the Local Planning Authority to discuss Devine Homes' vision for the delivery of the site.

Yours faithfully



**Nexus Planning**

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