

Objection to Policies GU4 (Wild Meadows) and GU5 (Former Highways Depot), Chapel Lane, Guestling Green – Rother Local Plan 2025-2042

Dear Rother Planning Policy Team,

We, the residents of Guestling Green and the surrounds, strongly object to the proposed allocations under Policies GU4 (Wild Meadows, some 20 dwellings) and GU5 (Former Guestling Highways Depot, some 8 dwellings) in the Draft Local Plan 2025-2042. These greenfield and brownfield sites, both on Chapel Lane, would collectively add 28 new homes to our tiny, historic hamlet in the heart of the High Weald National Landscape. This would cause irreversible harm to our irreplaceable rural character, breach statutory protections, exacerbate practical issues like flooding and traffic, and serve no demonstrated local need. We urge the removal of both sites entirely from the plan, with all growth redirected to less sensitive local urban areas.

Guestling Green is a quintessential Wealden hamlet: a loose cluster of ancient buildings scattered around the Grade I listed St Laurence's Church (dating to the 12th century), with iconic Grade II listed cottages such as The Thatch, Honeysuckle Cottage, and Magnolia Cottage evoking traditional Sussex life. Surrounded by ancient woodlands, irregular medieval fields, thick hedgerows, and panoramic views, it exemplifies the High Weald's outstanding natural beauty—designated for the highest level of national protection. The area draws walkers along the 1066 Country Trail and offers profound tranquillity, with dark skies and low pollution levels that support wildlife and residents alike. Our community is predominantly older (Rother has 32.5% over 65s, far above national averages), valuing this peaceful, low-density environment for health, wellbeing, and independence. Introducing 28 homes would suburbanise this precious pocket of rural England, setting a precedent for further sprawl and eroding what makes it special.

These allocations directly breach overriding legal and policy protections. First, Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) imposes a statutory duty on Rother District Council to "seek to further" the conservation and enhancement of the High Weald

National Landscape's natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage. The 2025 High Court ruling in *R (CPRE Kent) v Secretary of State* confirms this requires proactive enhancement, not mere mitigation of harm. Yet GU4—a 2.7-acre greenfield site of garden and equestrian paddocks—would fragment medieval field patterns and ancient hedgerows, while GU5 (0.96 acres, a former depot) would introduce dense housing incompatible with the dispersed settlement form. Neither “furthers” protection; they actively undermine it.

Similarly, the High Weald National Landscape Management Plan 2024–2029, adopted by Rother as a material consideration, is violated. Objectives S3 (conserving built heritage and settlement patterns), FH2 (maintaining small, irregular fields bounded by hedgerows and woodlands), and DS1/DS2 (preserving dark skies and minimising light pollution) are all contravened. GU4's development would suburbanise a classic dispersed hamlet, as per the Plan's Parish Information Maps for Guestling, while GU5's infill on a semi-rural site would add visual intrusion. The Plan's Dark Skies Planning Advice Note (2024) highlights the High Weald's rare darkness; new homes mean streetlights, security lighting, and window spill, disrupting nocturnal species like bats and owls, and harming human sleep and wellbeing.

Under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraphs 189–190, “great weight” must be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes, with major development refused unless exceptional circumstances exist and it serves the public interest. These sites—treated as “major” in scale for a tiny hamlet—fail this test. No overriding need justifies the harm, especially when Rother's housing targets can be met in less protected areas. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 further protects the settings of nearby Grade II buildings; both sites adjoin Honeysuckle Cottage, with GU4 also near The Thatch, risking harm to their historic integrity through visual and noise intrusion.

Practical harms are severe and unmitigable, starting with flood risk. GU4's northern and eastern parts are at surface water flood risk, as admitted in the plan and confirmed by Environment Agency maps (low to medium probability, 0.1–3.3% annually). Development on

the 1.36-acre built area would increase impermeable surfaces, worsening runoff toward the River Bewl tributary and Chapel Lane. Climate projections (UKCP18) forecast 25–40% more intense rainfall by the 2040s, amplifying risks in East Sussex's clay soils. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are required but challenging on a sloped site with high water tables, potentially failing biodiversity net gain under the Environment Act 2021. GU5 has southern runoff issues, compounding cumulative flooding from both sites. This breaches NPPF's sequential test, directing growth to lower-risk zones.

Traffic and infrastructure strain would be intolerable. Chapel Lane is narrow, winding, and hedge-lined—unsuitable for 60 + extra vehicles (assuming 1.5–2 per home). School runs, deliveries, and commuting would create congestion and safety hazards, especially near Guestling Bradshaw CE Primary School, already overpopulated at capacity. New families would drive to alternatives in Ore or Hastings, increasing air pollution (NO₂ and PM2.5) on local lanes. Rother's Sustainability Appraisal acknowledges inevitable pollution rises from development; in our clean-air hamlet, this is unacceptable. Noise pollution from cars, doors, and activity would shatter our profound rural tranquillity, vital for older residents' mental health and reduced isolation.

Pollution extends to light and water. GU4 and GU5 would introduce light spill, ruining the High Weald's dark skies—one of the South East's best for stargazing. Air quality, currently excellent (no Air Quality Management Areas), would deteriorate from traffic, harming respiratory health in our elderly-heavy community. Run off could carry pollutants (oils, chemicals) into streams and ancient woodlands, fragmenting habitats for rare species.

Crucially, there is no local need justifying this. The 2021 Guestling & Pett Housing Needs Survey—commissioned by the parish councils—identified only 11 households parish-wide needing affordable housing, all with strong local ties (family, work, residency). Mostly younger singles or couples seeking 1–2 bed units, this tiny demand has likely reduced through turnover. Parish councils reviewed it in 2023–2024 and confirmed insufficient support for low-cost housing. Yet the plan mandates 40% affordable (about 11 units total), serving district-wide waiting lists

and outsiders, altering our owner-occupied, cohesive community without benefiting locals. This ignores Rother's policies prioritising urban growth and fails to meet "local only" exception sites.

The cumulative impact of 28 homes is devastating: overpopulating our quiet hamlet, straining services (no shops, limited buses), harming tourism (our walks and heritage draw visitors), and eroding social cohesion. It sets a precedent for sprawl, undermining the High Weald's uniqueness. Better alternatives exist where infrastructure already exists .

We call for both sites' removal. This consultation (open until March 23, 2026) must heed local voices, as per the Interim Consultation Statement. Failing to protect Guestling Green betrays national duties and our community's future.

PETITION

Stop the Proposed Housing Developments in Guestling Green – Support a Neighbourhood Plan

We, the residents of Guestling Green and the surrounding area, strongly oppose the new housing developments, proposed in Rother District Council's Draft Local Plan (consultation open until 5 pm on 23 March 2026).

The Council is proposing:

- **20 new houses** on the greenfield site at Wild Meadows, Chapel Lane
- **8 new houses** on the brownfield site at the Former Guestling Highways Depot

These developments would:

- Do Harm to the historic setting and character of the village
- Increase traffic to Chapel Lane, highways, increasing pollution and flooding risks
- Put pressure on local services and diminish valued AONB protected area.
- Increase of noise and light pollution
- Erosion of local ecology, and residents well being.

A Neighbourhood Plan for Guestling Green, created with local input, would give residents a real voice in how our village develops and protects the special qualities we love.

We therefore ask Guestling Parish Council to:

- Support the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan for Guestling Green
- Apply to designate Guestling Green as a Neighbourhood Area

If you want these 28 houses NOT TO HAPPEN, please sign below:

Name		Date
K BUTCHER		13/3/26
M. BUTCHER		13/3/26
P. WILLIAMS		13-3-26
E KING		13-3-26
C Clark		13-3-26
J Bicknell		13-3-26

Hamzah Bickham	13.3.26.
DAVID GILL	13.3.26
Avin Cook	13.3.26
PHAR COOKS	13.3.26
TREENA HODGES	13/3/26
DARREN CORHAM	13/3/26.
Caroline Mott	13.3.26.
Lindsey Baker	13-3-26
Fuelyn Brett	14-3-26
TITMUS WELLS	14-3-26
Joanna McNulty	14-3-26
Colin McNulty	14-3-26
MILLIE CHINERY	14.3.26.
ALICE LOWETH.	14.3.26
Amy Alexander	14/3/26
Tim Alexander	14/3/26

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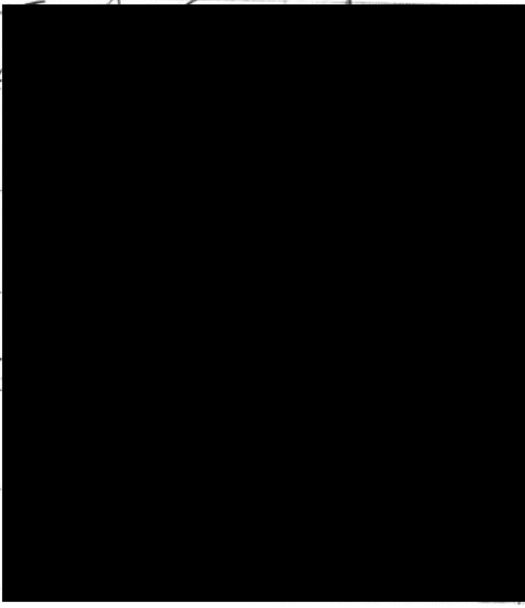
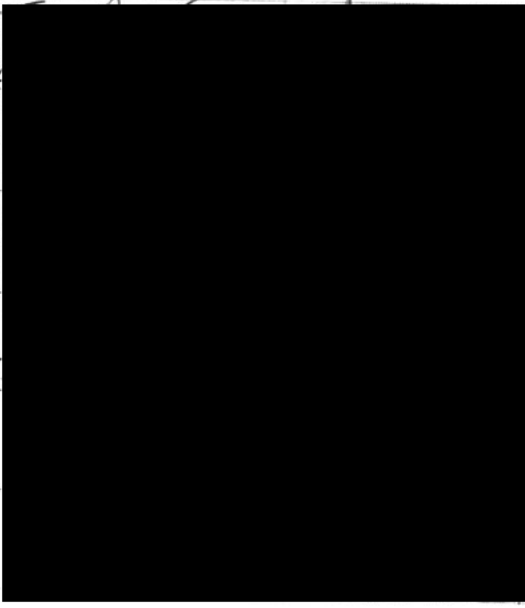
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Name	Address	Signature	Date
ALAN DANKIN			18/03/2026
Amyle Catmbsou			18/03/26
MIKE GLENNON			18/03/2026
JANE LOFTIN			18/03/26
Charlotte Potter			18/03/26
GILL PLANK			18/3/26

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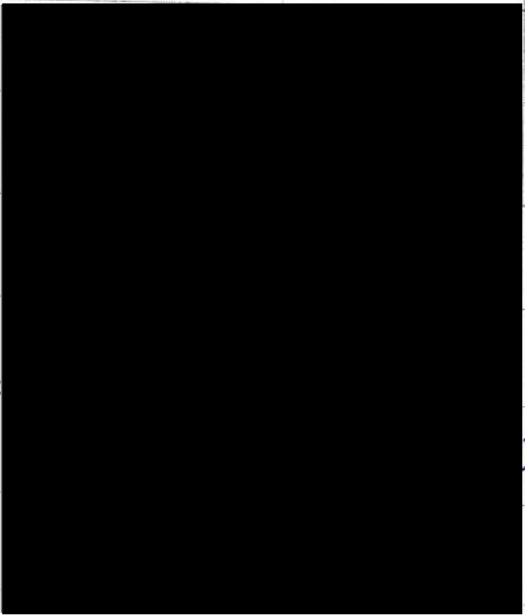
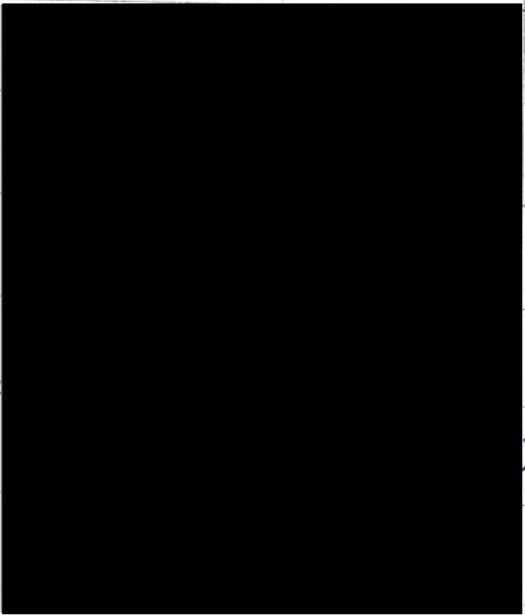
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Brian Dix-Taylor			13/2/26
PHIL BARDALL			13/3/26
Ollie Bardall			13/3/26
Karen Roberts - Bardall			13/3/26
Robert Pipe			21/3/26
Gillian Pipe			14/3/26

Louise PIPER		14/3/26
PHILIP JACKSON		14/3/26
Sue Miller		14/3/26
David Slack		14/3/26
A Slack		14/3/26
B. Trevel		14/3/25
G. Jefferys		14/3/26
L. Cutting		14-3-26
G. placod		14/3/26
E. Passey		14-3-26
BERNARD ERLES		14/3
Tim MOULD		15/3/26
Jane Clark		16/3/26
Gary Clark		16/3/26
B. Rapaccio		17/3/26
L. Rapaccio		17/3/26

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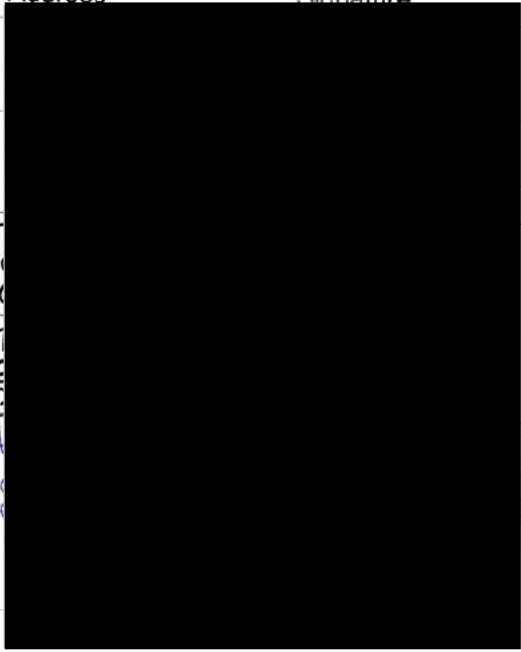
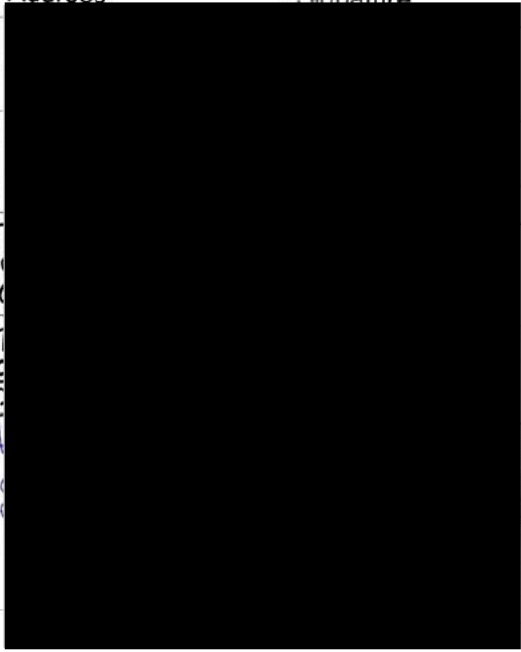
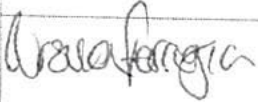
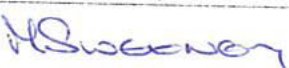
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Name	Address	Signature	Date
TONI FARRINGTON			17/03/2026
			17.03.26
SUE CUNNINGHAM			17.03.2026
BRUCE CUNNINGHAM			17.03.2026
			17/3/2026
			17/3/26



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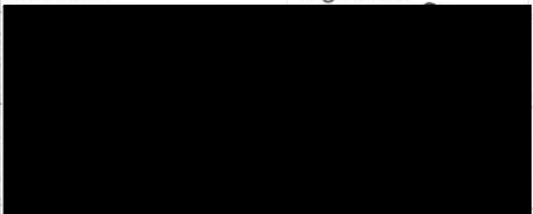
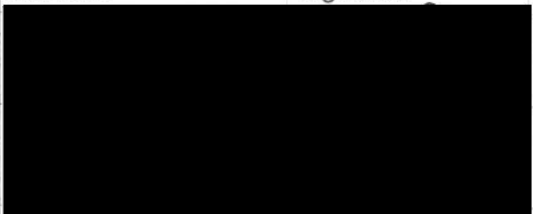
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ROSIE RICHARDS			19/03/26
TERRY RICHARDS			

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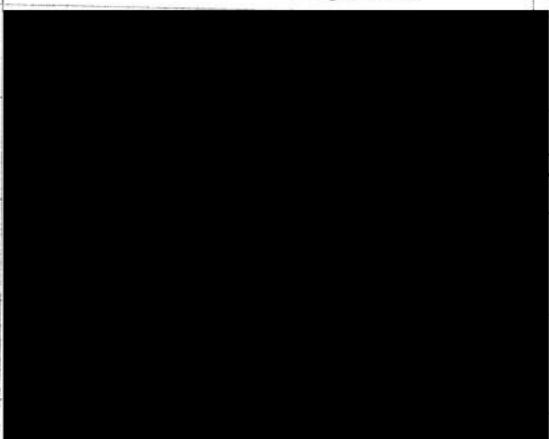
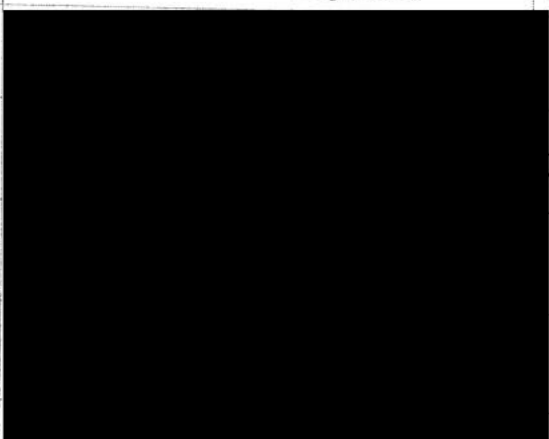
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COLIN HARDING			18/3/26
TEO JOGIATZIS			18/3/26
HANNAH JOGIATZIS			19.3.26

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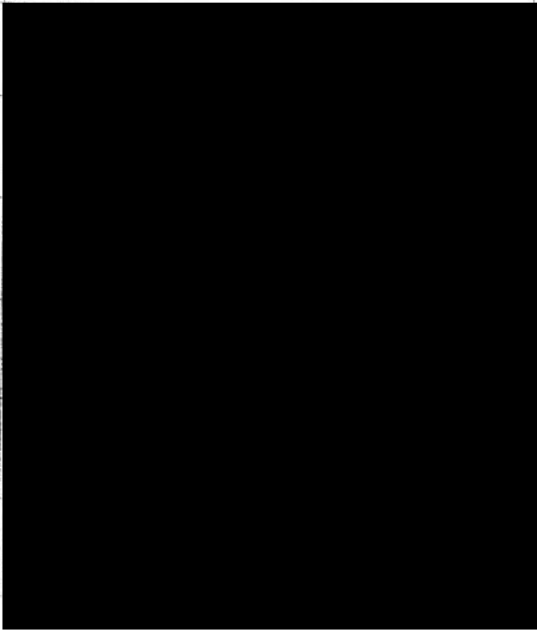
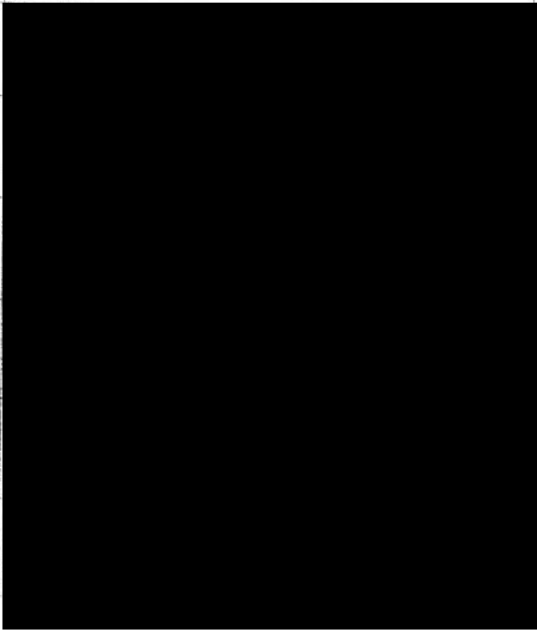
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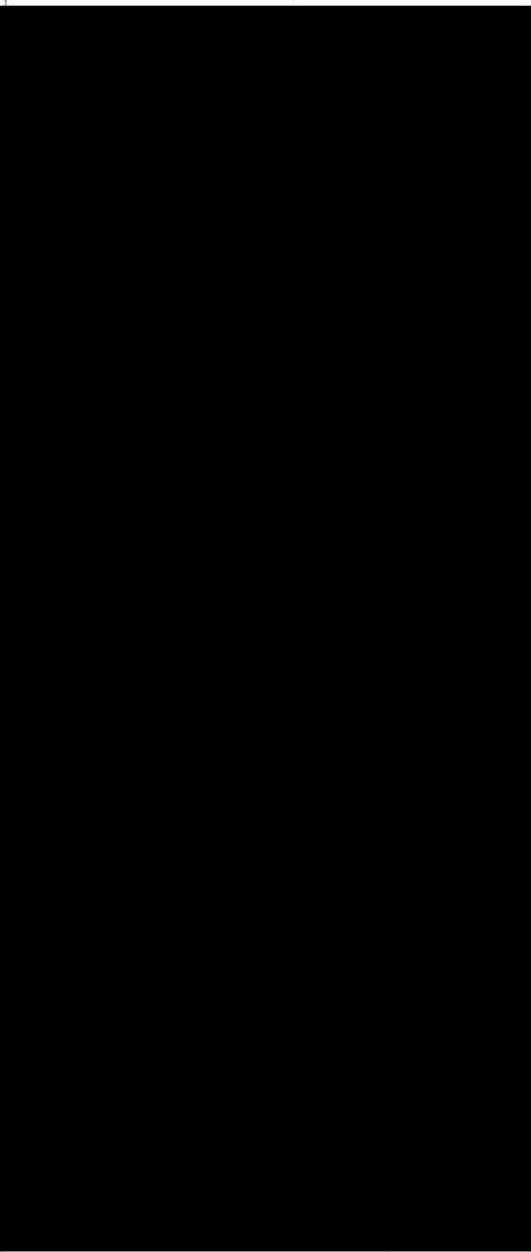
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J. DENICK			" "
C CRESSWELL			17-3-2026
T. CRESSWELL			17-3-2026
J. MEECE			14/03/2026
S. WHITE			17.3.2026.

Vicky Usher			19.3.2026.
Anne Rich			19.3.2026
Colin Rich			19.3.2026
Mel Hollands			19.3.26
Charlotte Hollands			19.3.26.
Julian Pembrell			19.3.26
Simon Cooper			19.3.26.
Barline Collins			19/3/26
BLAIN & ANSCOM SONA			19/3/26
HRD & ANSCOM			19/3/26
Lucy Stiles			19.3.26
Jody Taylor			19.3.26