

Strategic Case for Retaining HG4 in the Rother Local Plan (Regulation 18)

Site: HG4 – Land at The Lodge, London Road, Hurst Green

Indicative Capacity: ~150 dwellings (mixed tenure)

1) Purpose of this Briefing

We set out the planning, strategic and infrastructure-led justification for **retaining HG4** within the **Rother Local Plan 2025–2042 (Regulation 18)**. Our note demonstrates **need, sustainability, deliverability** (including standard phasing with utilities), practical **coordination with the A21 safety programme**, and the **village-scale benefits** that will secure Hurst Green's **long-term social and economic vitality**.

2) Strategic Housing Context

- **Rising district housing need:** Rother must plan for significantly higher housing numbers than previous plans. The Draft Local Plan currently achieves **around 54%** of the Government-imposed housing requirement (912 homes per year versus a planned ~495 homes per year).
In this context, **larger, deliverable allocations should be retained, not removed**, to maintain a credible supply trajectory to 2042 and avoid weakening the plan's soundness under the *Positively Prepared* and *Effective* tests.
- **Reg 18 is the shaping stage:** This consultation is the moment to refine suitable sites and add any necessary policy wording (e.g., utility phasing) before Regulation 19. Deleting a high-capacity, deliverable site at this stage would work against the plan-led imperative to meet need.

Implication: Removing ~150 dwellings from an already stretched supply undermines the plan's purpose and introduces soundness risks later.

3) Why HG4 Is the Right Strategic Site

3.1 Sustainability and access

- **Location:** HG4 is a logical, contained edge-of-settlement site at Hurst Green, immediately adjacent to the A21 and within walking distance of village facilities, and local train station.
- **Active travel:** The site can deliver safe walking and cycling links to the village and bus stops, supporting a people-first movement network.
- **Design tools already identified:** Landscape buffers, hedgerow retention, green-blue infrastructure and dark-skies measures will be secured through a design code and conditions.

Outcome: HG4 is a **well-performing, sustainable location** that can be shaped to fit the High Weald context.

3.2 Affordable housing at meaningful scale

- At around **150 homes**, HG4 can viably deliver a **substantial on-site affordable** contribution in one place—something very few rural sites in Northern Rother can achieve. Losing HG4 would materially reduce both district-wide and rural affordable delivery.

3.3 Utilities deliverability: feasible in principle with standard phasing

- **Southern Water – supportive position:** Southern Water’s Regulation 18 comment is supportive (not an objection). Their initial checks indicate that local sewer capacity may be limited and they request a **standard planning condition** so that **occupation** aligns with **network reinforcement**. This is a routine, proportionate approach that strengthens deliverability.
“Occupation of development will be phased to align with the delivery of sewerage infrastructure, in consultation with the service provider.”
- **UK Power Networks and Openreach – engagement initiated:** Both providers deliver new connections through established developer processes; any reinforcement or design detail is handled at the application stage. No fatal constraints have been identified at this point.

Outcome: Utilities capacity is **feasible in principle**, with **phased occupation** securing timing. This is a delivery tool, not a barrier.

4) A21 Safety Programme: Coordinated, Not Conflicted

During **2024**, the A21 Safety Package team contacted us **multiple times** to request survey access across parts of HG4 for **pre-construction surveys**. We will continue to cooperate so our scheme **supports** corridor safety, including at Coopers Corner.

- We will deliver a **Construction Traffic Plan** that avoids conflicts with traffic management windows.
- We will front-load **walk/cycle links** within and from the site to the village and bus stops.

Outcome: HG4 complements the **safety and movement objectives** for the A21 corridor and provides the **scale** to deliver local connectivity benefits and extend the reach of the A229.

5) High Weald National Landscape—Mitigation by Design

- **Landscape-led approach:** HG4’s contained edge allows **robust buffers, graduated building heights, hedgerow retention, GI/SuDS integration, and dark-skies compliance**.
 - **Outcome:** Landscape effects are **mitigable** while enabling Hurst Green to contribute sustainably to district-wide needs.
 - **SEE SEPARATE AONB RESPONSE**
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6) Neighbourhood Plan and Strategic Plan Period

The **Hurst Green Neighbourhood Plan (2021–2028)** is now “made”. However, the new Local Plan runs to **2042** and must meet updated, higher strategic needs. Where necessary to secure sufficient growth,

the Local Plan **supersedes** earlier boundaries/allocations. Allocating HG4 is therefore **entirely consistent** with the plan-led system when justified by evidence.

7) Why Homes at HG4 Strengthen Hurst Green's Long-Term Survival

Delivering new homes at HG4 will:

- **Sustain local services** by increasing footfall and everyday spend, helping to retain and improve facilities.
- Enable **inter-generational living**—homes for young families, key workers and downsizers—supporting social resilience and informal care networks.
- Underpin **public realm** and **active-travel** improvements, with scale to fund meaningful community space and green infrastructure.
- Support **public transport viability** through increased patronage and better walk/cycle access to bus stops.

Bottom line: Appropriately phased growth at HG4 helps keep Hurst Green **viable, vibrant and connected** over the long term.

8) Recommended Reg 18 Policy Refinements

1. **Wastewater phasing (Southern Water):**

“Occupation of the development will be phased to align with the delivery of sewerage infrastructure, in consultation with the service provider.”

2. **A21 coordination & construction traffic:**

“A Construction Traffic Plan will be agreed with the highway authority to avoid conflicts with programmed A21 safety works; pedestrian and cycle links to the village and bus stops will be delivered early in the build to support safe, active travel.”

3. **High Weald design code:**

“A site-specific design code will secure landscape buffers, hedgerow retention, SuDS/GI integration, height transitions at the edge, and dark-skies lighting consistent with High Weald guidance and Local Plan policy.”

9) Consequences of Deleting HG4 (Soundness Tests)

- **Positively Prepared / Effective:** Losing ~150 homes (including a large affordable tranche) in a constrained district **weakens the housing trajectory** and undermines the plan's ability to meet its stated purpose.
- **Justified:** With extensive National Landscape coverage and limited edge-of-settlement options of this scale, there is **no obvious like-for-like substitute**. Deletion without a credible alternative creates an unjustified gap.

- **Consistent with National Policy:** Reg 18 is intended to **refine viable sites** (e.g., with phasing/design conditions), not discard them when district-wide need is rising.

Result: Deleting HG4 would **weaken** the plan's ability to pass all four soundness tests at Regulation 19/Examination.

10) Conclusion (from us as the sole landowners)

- **HG4 is strategic and deliverable.** It is a rare rural site that is sustainable, infrastructure-aligned, and capable of **meaningful affordable housing** and **village-scale benefits**.
- **Utilities are supportive in principle.** Southern Water's request for **occupation-phasing** is a standard, positive mechanism; UK Power Networks and Openreach engagement is underway with **no fatal constraints** identified at this stage.
- **National Highways engagement is active.** 2024 survey access requests confirm a clear path to coordination with A21 safety works.
- **Village vitality:** Homes at HG4 are **integral to Hurst Green's long-term social and economic survival**, sustaining services, supporting families across generations, and funding public realm and active-travel improvements.

Our recommendation: Retain HG4 at Regulation 18 with the short **phasing** and **design** refinements above, so the Regulation 19 plan proceeds with a **clear, deliverable and defensible allocation** that meets strategic need and **strengthens Hurst Green for the future**.