



Homes  
England

# Representations to Rother Draft Local Plan Regulation 18 Development Strategy and Site Allocations Consultation

Land at Northeye, Bexhill (Draft  
Policy ref. BX28)



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# 1. Introduction

The following representations are made in response to Rother District Council's (RDC) Regulation 18 consultation on the Development Strategy and Site Allocations Draft which forms part of the draft Rother Local Plan. These representations are prepared in relation to the Land at Northeye, Bexhill as shown on Figure 1 which is within Homes England's ownership and identified as part of the draft allocation policy BX28 (Land at Northeye, and adjoining land).



Figure 1: Site Location Plan, Land at Northeye

These representations provide comments on a range of questions posed within the Regulation 18 draft document including detailed comments on the Site Allocation BX28. Specifically, we respond below to:

- Question 2 – Proposed housing target;
- Question 5 – Infrastructure needs and priorities;
- Question 7 – Density;
- Question 8 – Proposed Overall Development Strategy;
- Question 10 – Proposed Vision and development strategy for Bexhill;
- Question 23 – West of Bexhill Growth Area;
- Question 68 – Interim Sustainability Appraisal; and
- Question 69 – Other issues, options and other matters.

## 2. Background

### Homes England

Homes England is the Government's housing and regeneration agency. Our mission is to enable the delivery of high-quality, safe and sustainable homes and vibrant, inclusive communities through collaboration with the housing sector and local leaders.

Our Strategic Plan 2025-2030 sets out how we will use our expertise, funding, resources and influence to deliver better homes and places for the people who need them. To achieve this, we will:

- Significantly increase new housing supply and accelerate housing delivery across all tenures
- Enable the delivery of homes and mixed use schemes on brownfield land, as part of local regeneration strategies
- Collaborate with partners and local leaders to enable development and regeneration that boosts local economic growth
- Ensure homes are safe, secure and decent, and residents safeguarded.

It is also our role to partner with local government and to work collaboratively with Local Planning Authorities to help tackle these challenges and enable the delivery of high-quality, sustainable new homes and regeneration.

### Land at Northeye

As a brownfield site, already allocated for housing in the 2019 Development and Site Allocations Local Plan (DaSA) (policy BEX10), the principle for redevelopment of the Land at Northeye for a residential-led mixed use development has already been firmly established. We (Homes England) therefore firmly welcome the re-allocation of Land at Northeye in the draft Local Plan, confirming the Council's recognition that it is a sustainable site that is suitable to contribute towards the future housing needs of the Bexhill area and wider Rother District.

Before the transfer of Northeye to Homes England in February 2026, the Agency worked with the previous owners to submit the site to RDC's Call for Sites for an updated housing allocation in the emerging Local Plan for approximately 220 homes. We believe this land continues to offer an excellent opportunity to deliver much needed new market and affordable homes and generate a range of social benefits to the community. The site is available for development now and will make an early contribution towards Rother's identified housing requirements, through its potential to deliver housing and the site's associated infrastructure early in the plan period.

Homes England's role now is to drive forward the delivery of this existing housing allocation without delay. This will involve optimising housing numbers and creating a vibrant and successful place. Whilst the site was transferred to us in February 2026, we have already commenced technical survey work and initiated discussions with RDC officers, local councillors, and residents with the aim of preparing and submitting an outline planning application for residential development in early 2027. This future application will be supported by a raft of environmental and technical documents that will further demonstrate the site's suitability for development and deliverability in the short to medium term. We would be happy to share the outcomes of the technical work with the Council once available, to support and demonstrate the deliverability of the Land at Northeye through the progression of the Local Plan and to ensure these can be taken fully into account in future iterations of the Plan and its supporting evidence base.

The existing allocation (policy BEX10) in the adopted DaSA is for approximately 140 dwellings. As indicated in the Call for Sites submission in July last year, the site is capable of delivering more homes. The principle for increasing capacity in the site is consistent with Para 124 of the NPPF which requires LPAs to “set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or ‘brownfield’ land”.

Subject to further technical work to optimise capacity and opportunity at Northeye, it is anticipated that approximately 250 homes could be delivered. As shown on the Indicative Masterplan shared in the Call for Sites (Figure 2 below), the additional homes are proposed to be primarily delivered on the northern section of the site, where the existing site allocation requires the provision of sports pitches.

In support of the objectives of the Local Plan to maximise development capacity of sites to meet challenging local housing targets and in the line with the requirements of the NPPF, these representations set out a number of positive changes to the draft policy that would support these objectives, which includes removing the requirements to deliver onsite sport pitches, instead, setting out an alternative strategy for the delivery of sports pitches at West of Bexhill Growth Area, and mechanism towards which the Land at Northeye could contribute towards this.



Figure 2: Indicative Masterplan for Northeye, as submitted in the 2025 Call for Sites submission

### 3. Response to Rother Local Plan Development Strategy and Site Allocations Draft (Regulation 18) Version

These representations have been structured according to the questions in the Consultation. Hereafter, the Local Plan Development Strategy and Site Allocations Draft (Regulation 18) Version is referred to as the 'Consultation Draft'.

#### **Part 2, Chapter 3 – Development Needs**

*Question 2 - Do you have any comments on the Council's proposed housing target for the Local Plan of 8,427 dwellings over the 17-year plan period, or 495 dwellings annually?*

In line with paragraph 62 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the minimum number of homes needed for an area across the plan period should be informed by a local housing need assessment using the standard method. As recognised within the Consultation Draft, the housing need for Rother District Council is a minimum of 912 dwellings a year, which we recognise is a significant increase against the housing requirement in the adopted Local Plan.

It is agreed that paragraph 69 of the NPPF provides that authorities establish a housing requirement figure for their area which shows the extent of the above housing need that can be accommodated.

In this context, we recognise the constrained nature of Rother District and therefore the Council's difficulty in meeting their full local housing needs. We support the approach taken by RDC in maximising the amount of homes they can deliver across the Plan Period through exploring extensions to existing allocations, identifying and supporting higher densities for sites, and identifying new site allocations.

Land at Northeye is one such suitably located site where great emphasis should be placed on optimising the delivery of homes to assist in meeting the Council's increased housing requirements, whilst ensuring policies are deliverable and respond to site specific considerations and market signals.

We welcome the recognition from RDC of the opportunity to deliver more homes at Land at Northeye than the capacity of the adopted allocation policy BEX10. This suitably ambitious approach, which can be achieved through the proposed amendments to the draft policies as noted in our responses to the following questions in the Consultation Draft, will ensure the plan will be effective in delivering the proposed development strategy, as required by the tests of soundness (per NPPF paragraph 36).

#### **Part 2, Chapter 4 – Infrastructure Needs**

*Question 5 – Do you have any comments on infrastructure needs or priorities to support the proposed Development Strategy?*

As indicated in our response to question 2, there is an urgent need to deliver homes in the district. Alongside this, it is important to secure the timely delivery of infrastructure to support RDC's proposed development strategy and delivery of housing sites, and we support the use of an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) to do this. Land at Northeye specifically is a brownfield site with an existing housing allocation that has been earmarked for development since at least 2019. Homes England is now in the position to bring this site forward and accelerate the delivery of housing, so it is imperative that wider infrastructure delivery that is not required to make housing at the Land at Northeye acceptable in planning terms does not hold back housing delivery. The emerging Local Plan and the supporting Infrastructure Delivery Plan need to ensure that the infrastructure attributed to the draft allocations is proportionate, particularly for those that are already allocated for housing in the adopted Local Plan.

Any infrastructure must meet the CIL Regulation 122 tests to be necessary to make the development acceptable, directly related to the development, and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development. It should also be tested through the Local Plan viability work to ensure that the requirement does not impact on the deliverability of the site – particularly relevant to complex brownfield sites such as Northeye where overall enabling costs will be higher.

In this context, there is a need for the IDP to be refined, as it acknowledges in paragraph 4.10, to clarify based on evidence the specific infrastructure that is required to be delivered or contributed towards for individual sites.

The IDP currently identifies infrastructure to be delivered by ‘All Development at Bexhill’ or ‘District Wide’. However, it is not clearly evidenced that ‘All Development at Bexhill’ would have an impact on these infrastructure items; one such example is the improvements to the Hastings Road network, to the east of Bexhill. In the absence of evidence, it is considered unlikely that improvements required to the Hastings Road network is directly related to the Land at Northeye.

It is also noted that the proposed West of Bexhill Growth Area groups together the draft allocations due to their proximity. Whilst it is recognised there are likely to be some interdependencies and cumulative infrastructure requirements, the individual sites within the Growth Area are of differing scales, and therefore will have different infrastructure impacts and requirements. This nuance should be reflected in the IDP Schedule and wording of Growth Area draft policies such that the IDP is effective in supporting individual allocations to come forward early in the plan period. Further consideration should also be given as to how CIL funding can also be allocated in a way so as to meet the cumulative infrastructure needs across the Growth Area. As such, future iterations of the IDP should clarify which specific infrastructure requirements relate to each draft allocation, to ensure the CIL Regulation 122 tests are met.

Furthermore, it should also be noted that within the West of Bexhill Growth Area each site has different constraints and considerations which need to be addressed to deliver homes. Developing brownfield sites, such as Land at Northeye, will include requirement for demolition and remediation beyond that expected for other greenfield sites. Therefore, the viability of any infrastructure requirements set through the IDP need to be vigorously tested against each allocation. This further emphasises that there is unlikely to be one approach to infrastructure that will fit all of the draft allocations in West Bexhill, and each site will need to be considered against its own constraints in preparing the IDP.

Overall, we are supportive of contributing towards and/or delivering infrastructure improvements which have been underpinned by evidence (per NPPF paragraph 32) and meet the CIL Regulation 122 tests. Where it meets those tests, we will willingly contribute towards local infrastructure requirements. Furthermore, we note that under the current CIL charging schedule development at the Land at Northeye would be liable for CIL which is collected to fund broader infrastructure that is not site-specific.

We recognise the IDP is a living document and will be reviewed as the emerging Local Plan and its evidence base progresses. We therefore reserve the right to review and comment on the IDP as the Local Plan progresses and more evidence becomes available to underpin the allocation of infrastructure.

### Sports Pitches

Section 4 of the IDP Part A, outlines a need to deliver new sports pitches within Rother, and identifies specific opportunities to deliver this in Bexhill. The IDP is informed by the Hastings and Rother Playing

Pitch and Built Facilities Strategy (2023), Rother District Council Leisure Facilities Strategy (2023) and Built Facilities Supply and Demand Audit (2023).

Land at Northeye is listed as an “opportunity location” for Bexhill, alongside Kiteye Farm, Worsham, St Richard’s Catholic College education sites (to potentially extend their current provision) and new school sites, and key strategic sites of Polegrove and Little Common Recreation Grounds. BX28 is identified in part due to existing provision, however while a pitch did exist in the past, this related to the previous use as a prison and subsequently a military training centre, and was never publicly available and as such, it is not an existing sports facility for which a replacement is necessary.

While there is an identified need for playing pitches within the West Bexhill area, allocating these as part of BX28 is contrary to other objectives of the Plan such as maximising development capacity of the scheme, does not take account of other constraints on site which we have previous set out in our response to the Call for Sites and would undermine deliverability of the site.

The supporting evidence base accompanying the consultation supports this position in as much as:

- the HELAA (ref. BEX0007), recognises that it would be possible and appropriate to increase the number of dwellings that can be accommodated on the site from the existing allocation policy BEX10, acknowledging that the provision of a sports pitch on the site may no longer be appropriate;
- the HELAA at page 33 is clear that *“further work will be required to ascertain whether the sports pitches could still be accommodated here or at an alternative suitable location”*;
- Paragraph 4.59 of the IDP Part A recognises that further feasibility/business case analysis is required to develop the list of proposed key infrastructure provision and where this is directed to; and
- Paragraph 4.59 of the IDP notes it would be acceptable to accommodate a pitch in an alternative location in West Bexhill if a pitch at Northeye isn’t/couldn’t to be brought forward. This position is not reflected in the IDP Schedule (IDP Part B) or draft policy BX28.

Consistent with the position set out in the evidence base, we note that Sport England have provided comment to the Consultation Draft (representation ID: 29442) and raised concerns for how an equivalent quantity and quality of sports pitches may be provided at BX28, recognising that the site is more constrained (for this purpose) outside of the area of the previous pitch. As there is no existing pitch at Land at Northeye, there should be no requirement to re-provide or provide an improved pitch. As such, alternative locations in West Bexhill should be identified.

On this basis, there is insufficient justification to include a requirement for Sports pitches within the BX28 allocation. In the context of a wider growth area strategy, Land at Northeye should not be the preferred location and a more strategic solution should be sought to ensure any future provision is well located and can benefit both new and existing residents. It will therefore be necessary for the next version of the Local Plan to set out an appropriate strategy for the delivery of sports pitches at West of Bexhill Growth Area without reliance on Land at Northeye, in order to prioritise it for the early delivery of housing and maximising the reuse of a previously developed site.

Such an approach would be consistent with Criterion ‘viii’ of draft Policy BX18 (West Bexhill Growth Area – Infrastructure Policy) notes that new development within the West Bexhill Growth Area should provide (either by direct provision or through financial contributions) outdoor sports facilities including formal playing pitches. We believe any sports facilities in West Bexhill would be most effective if they

were provided in a consolidated manner on a single site, creating a more desirable facility that encourages take-up by local sports groups, rather than operating across multiple locations. In our experience, this also supports the more successful operation and management (reducing costs) of the sports pitches, and interest from potential operators that can help make it a success.

The co-location of these facilities would be directly supported by the NPPF (paragraph 125) in that it would reduce the land take of these facilities, reducing the amount of land required for buffers, parking and changing/club house/storage facilities. By preparing a consolidated sports pitch strategy to support growth at the West of Bexhill, this would optimise the space available for housing within the draft allocation sites, further enabling the Council to maximise the number of homes they can achieve within the Plan period and promoting a strategy that is positively prepared, and makes an effective use of land as per paragraph 124 of the NPPF.

### Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

RDC has adopted CIL, with the charging schedule coming into effect on 4 April 2016.

To ensure clarity regarding the delivery of infrastructure, the IDP Schedule (IDP Part B) should clarify which infrastructure requirements are to be funded by Section 106 or CIL to ensure suitable funds are allocated and provide clarity for those bringing forward sites. This would provide total transparency regarding how infrastructure will be funded and will avoid double-counting of contributions. In doing so, it should be noted that the role of Section 106 contributions is to address site specific infrastructure problems, whereas CIL funding is to be spent on strategic matters.

This approach (to avoiding double counting and the role of CIL v Section 106 contributions) was confirmed by the RDC Interim Head of Planning at the January 2025 Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy Allocations Panel (SCILAP). The SCILAP noted that the Council do not have an Infrastructure List on which to base the allocation of CIL funding. It was identified that this was in part due to the aged status of the IDP, and that the IDP would need to be updated in due course. In the interim, members of the SCILAP are being asked to assess whether to place schemes on the Infrastructure List and therefore allocate them for CIL funding.

Infrastructure providers are now being engaged, and the IDP is now in the process of being updated. The revised IDP will therefore be able to inform a new Infrastructure list on which the SCILAP can use to inform the designation of CIL funding. To aid this process and avoid ambiguity, IDP should be explicit which infrastructure schemes it expects will be delivered by CIL funding.

Based on the Council's adopted Local Development Scheme, we understand that the CIL charging schedule is to be reviewed. We would welcome a discussion with RDC as we prepare any application for the Land at Northeye, to understand how infrastructure will be funded, and we reserve the right to comment on this as the consultation takes place.

### **Part 3, Chapter 5 – Preparing the Development Strategy**

*Question 7 – Do you have any comments on the preferred approach for housing density shown in Figure 9, or on the updated Density Study (2026)?*

As referenced in our response to question 2, we support RDC's approach of optimising density on draft allocations where this is achievable and appropriate (such as in response to local context, including topography and surrounding landscape), to maximise the Council's opportunities to meet their housing need. On some sites, however, it may instead be more appropriate to maximise the developable area,

rather than increasing densities, to respond to the site characteristics, promote the effective use of land as required by planning policies (per paragraph 124 of the NPPF). This should be considered on a site-by-site basis and account for the relevant characteristics of the site (and wider area) and pressing need for housing in Rother.

We are supportive of the Council's preferred approach to progress Option B as outlined in the previous Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan consultation. However, the draft policy wording as indicated in the Consultation Draft in relation to suitable housing densities should reflect the appropriacy of variations in density across individual development sites, to recognise the surrounding character, transitions across the site, such as in edge-of-settlement locations, local needs and market signals. This will ensure the Plan is in accordance with paragraph 129 of the NPPF which recognises the need for planning policies to support the efficient use of land, while maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting, and securing well-designed and healthy places.

To this end, while the range of densities proposed is supported, any references to densities in draft policy or emerging allocations should also explicitly recognise that site characteristics should be considered, while also promoting high quality placemaking, meeting local needs and ensuring deliverability and viability.

### **Part 3, Chapter 6 – Development Strategy for Rother**

*Question 8 – Do you have any comments on the Council's proposed Overall Development Strategy?*

We support the overarching development strategy including growth areas and specific sites of varying scales to meet the District's housing needs as identified in the HEDNA and proposed in the Consultation Draft. The proposed strategy reflects paragraph 61 of the NPPF which outlines the importance of bringing forward a sufficient variety of land where it is needed and addressing the needs of groups with specific housing requirements.

We support Bexhill being a key focus of development, as the largest settlement in the District, together with the allocation of sites elsewhere in the district to meet needs across the district's towns and villages. We support West Bexhill specifically contributing towards future growth as a logical and sustainable location for new development, as supported by the Council's evidence base.

*Question 10 – Do you have any comments on the proposed Vision and development strategy for Bexhill, including the development figures shown in Figures 13 and 14?*

We support the vision and overall development strategy for Bexhill, as the key focus for residential growth, and the identification of the West of Bexhill Growth Area and specifically Land at Northeye (within draft allocation policy BX28) as a suitable location for future housing development. The 'Live Well Locally' strategy is also supported as a positive ambition for future growth to the West of Bexhill.

The West of Bexhill Growth Area will need to be supported by relevant infrastructure. However, as referenced in our response to Question 5, the draft allocations are diverse in nature, character and proposed delivery timescales. Given Land at Northeye has an existing allocation and is proposed to come forward early in the plan period, it is important to be recognised in policy, the IDP and supporting evidence that the broader infrastructure for Bexhill (that is not site specific) will be funded through CIL. We will seek to work with the Council through further iterations of the IDP to ensure that any additional site-specific infrastructure identified is evidenced to meet the CIL Regulation 122 tests.

With regard to the requirement for a coordinated masterplanning approach/potential design coding (as per paragraph 6.33 of the Consultation Draft) to the West of Bexhill Growth Area, we are in general supportive of ensuring high quality design and that the proposed allocations are cohesive. Indeed, Homes England is committed to high-quality placemaking, utilising the Building for a Healthy Life Standards and the masterplanning of Northeye will account for the character of the surrounding area and connections into the neighbouring built environment. We are further committed to ensuring that any early development at Land at Northeye does not prejudice the wider West of Bexhill allocations.

However, any requirement for masterplanning or design codes for the West Bexhill Growth Area must be cognisant that there are multiple landownerships with varying delivery trajectories. Therefore, it is important to ensure that any such requirement is firstly achievable but most importantly does not delay the delivery of much needed homes, particularly within the early Plan period.

In this respect, it is considered that any West Bexhill Growth Area or site allocation policies could suitably contain requirements to ensure there is cohesive connectivity/sufficient facilities in the right location.

### **Part 3, Chapter 7 – Site Allocations**

*Question 23 – Do you have any comments on the proposed policy BX18 – West of Bexhill Growth Area – Infrastructure Policy?*

We strongly support the identification of West of Bexhill as a Growth Area, and believe this represents a sustainable strategy for growth in Rother. We also support the proposed vision for the West of Bexhill Growth Area and the introduction of a specific policy in relation to the infrastructure requirements of the sites. However, there needs to be increased nuance within the draft policy wording to clarify the relevance and infrastructure responsibilities for the specific sites within the Growth Area, to ensure the Plan is fully effective (per NPPF paragraph 36).

Per our response to Question 10 above of the Consultation Draft, we would welcome further clarity in regard to how the Growth Area will be '*coordinated through a masterplanning approach*'. This is particularly relevant given recent Government intentions to prohibit the adoption of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) after 30 June 2026. Given the multiple landownerships and delivery trajectories, we recommend that the emerging policy BX18 and the individual site allocation policies set the direction and requirements for delivery of infrastructure in the Growth Area, to avoid delay to the delivery of homes pending any Growth Area wide masterplanning or Design Coding.

As outlined in further detail below, there should not be a generalised requirement for the individual site allocations of West of Bexhill to provide infrastructure for the wider Growth Area in policy, as this leads to uncertainty over responsibilities for infrastructure. Instead, this should be controlled and coordinated through the IDP and associated Infrastructure Funding Statements. Furthermore, each site's requirements should be based on evidence of what each site needs to provide to ensure the development is acceptable in planning terms (per NPPF paragraph 68), and to suitably mitigate unavoidable significant adverse impacts (per NPPF paragraph 33). This is a fundamental requirement of the CIL tests.

Lastly, with regard to criterion xi, it is the responsibility of the wastewater providers to plan for growth, both current and foreseen future housing in its area as identified within Local Plans, such that improvements are planned, undertaken and operational for those homes to connect. Therefore, for sites such as Land at Northeye, which have been allocated for housing since 2019, the improvements to

the wastewater facility, if needed, forms part of their statutory responsibility and any delay in undertaking that responsibility should not hold up the delivery of homes.

#### Draft policy BX28: Land at Northeys, and adjoining land

We strongly support the proposed re-allocation of Land at Northeys and its contribution towards the proposed growth in West Bexhill, forming part of the West of Bexhill Growth Area (BX18). However, for the reasons set out below we query the Council's approach to combine it with the two neighbouring parcels (HELAA ref. BEX0103 and BEX0119) into a single allocation.

Whilst the proposed allocation of Land at Northeys (HELAA ref. BEX0007) may sit adjacent to the two neighbouring allocated parcels (HELAA ref. BEX0103 and BEX0119), they are distinctly separate in many respects. Firstly, they are in different landownerships, an important consideration that will have an inevitable bearing on the speed of delivery of each sites. Land at Northeys is an existing allocation with Homes England progressing pre-application discussions imminently with an objective of submitting a planning application in 2027. Therefore, it is critical that any allocation for the Land at Northeys with these two neighbouring sites does not inadvertently restrict this early delivery of homes.

Furthermore, whilst the sites have adjoining boundaries, 'on the ground' they are distinct by virtue of significant differences in levels between the sites and the presence of strong tree belts and landscape features along boundaries (including a stream in one location). As a result of these features, the three sites would be accessed independently and there is limited opportunity for interrelationship between the sites that would warrant their being combined in an allocation, or required to come forward together.

Notwithstanding the above, even if issues around integration could be addressed, there is no formal arrangement in place between the landowners and therefore Homes England does not have the ability to bring forward a planning application covering the area and cannot place reliance on land outside of its control to support the delivery of BEX0007. Should there be a specific requirement for the sites to be brought forward collectively as currently suggested, the allocation is unlikely to be deliverable, bringing into question the soundness of the Plan and/or would delay progress towards securing a planning permission on the site which would enable delivery within the first five years of the Plan.

Accordingly, to reflect the distinctiveness of these adjoining sites and ensure the allocation remains deliverable, we recommend that the sites are allocated separately, with their own specific policy wording. This will ensure the Plan is able to effectively deliver housing on identified sites without unnecessary delay.

As has been highlighted above, Homes England is fully committed to high-quality placemaking, utilising the Building for a Healthy Life Standards and the masterplanning of Land at Northeys will account for the character of the surrounding area and connections into the existing and future neighbouring built environment. Through ongoing planning application discussions with RDC, if RDC maintain the inclusion of these two sites as allocations within the emerging Local Plan, we will ensure the delivery of the homes and infrastructure at Northeys does not prejudice and where possible can complement the later delivery of these adjoining sites.

With regard to the specific policy wording, we support the delivery of housing at Northeys and believe allocated sites should provide all the infrastructure required to make that them acceptable in planning terms and to mitigate any potential impacts, in accordance with the tests for planning obligations

outlined in NPPF paragraph 58. As such, we have a number of specific comments to make in relation to the criteria listed in draft policy BX28, supporting draft policy BX18:

- Criterion 'i': Whilst Homes England's default position is to comply with affordable housing policies where feasible, it must be noted that there are a number of viability considerations associated with the redevelopment of the site, including site remediation, owing to its brownfield nature. On this basis, we would expect appropriate levels of affordable housing to be determined through an updated Local Plan Viability Assessment, with the policy wording amended accordingly, and/or include additional flexibility that any provision is 'subject to viability testing'.
- Criterion 'ii': should be amended to make clear that infrastructure should only be provided where necessary to make the individual allocation acceptable in planning terms (in accordance with the CIL tests, per NPPF paragraph 58 and Regulation 122(2) of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010), not where the infrastructure needs derive from elsewhere in the Growth Area. This will ensure the Plan is consistent with national planning policy and effective in delivering growth (per the soundness tests, NPPF paragraph 36).
- Criterion iii): we recommend the policy wording is updated to reflect the NPPF paragraph 135 that requires policies and decisions to be "***sympathetic to ...landscape setting***" (to not prevent or discourage appropriate innovation or change such as increased densities) rather than seek "*protection of the landscape and character of the countryside.*" The use of "sympathetic" instead of "protection" further allows for appropriate responses to the landscape to be considered in any design evolution for housing at Northeye.
- Criterion 'viii':, reference is made to the provision of "*community uses including formal playing pitch(es) alongside ancillary changing and parking facilities, unless proposals are included to provide such pitches at an alternative off-site location*". As outlined in our responses to Questions 5 and 69 of this consultation, we believe any decision to include specific reference to sports pitches in the draft policy wording should be supported by evidence to ensure there is full justification for this type of community use on Land at Northeye. As this evidence is not currently available, we recommend that the wording of Criterion 'viii' should be revised to say 'community uses', with the specifics of which to be determined at the application stage based on local needs and the emerging IDP. Please see question 5 for our full response in relation to Sports Pitches at Land at Northeye, and our preferred strategy for the provision of financial contributions, where necessary.
- Criterion 'xi': it is not necessary to prescribe the avoidance of specific locations for built development, as this will be informed by the site specific flood risk assessment and any flood modelling that will accompany a future planning application. To be in accordance with national policy (as required for a Plan to be found sound, per paragraph 36 of the NPPF), the policy should simply require the submission of a Flood Risk Assessment to confirm suitable areas for development that are flood resilient and that the development does not increase flood risk elsewhere, in accordance with paragraph 181 of the NPPF.
- Criteria 'xiii' and 'xiv': require development at Land at Northeye to provide an assessment and evaluation of the site's archaeological potential, and provide a connection to the local sewerage system, respectively. We note that these criteria relate to development management elements that will be requirements for all development sites and so query the duplication of national policy (which should be avoided, per paragraph 16 of the NPPF) within draft policy BX28.

Finally, it is noted that external bodies are referenced within the wording of draft policy BX28 (ie criterion iv referring to National Highways and East Sussex County Council) and reiterated in relation to the West Bexhill Growth Area (draft policy BX18). While we recognise that they will be consultees for any planning application that comes forward on the site, this is a matter for planning application and does not need referencing in the site allocation. Homes England commit to working with all relevant bodies during the planning application process, however, explicitly mandating in policy a need to meet external bodies (undefined) requirements would not meet the tests outlined at Paragraph 36 of the NPPF as this approach lacks justification in that it is not based on any evidence of what these requirements are.

### **Local Plan Appendices – Sustainability Appraisal**

*Question 68 – Do you have any comments on the Interim Sustainability Appraisal in support of the Regulation 18 stage consultation on the Development Strategy and Site Allocations (January 2026)?*

We support the preparation and use of the Interim Sustainability Appraisal (January 2026). In confirming the appropriacy of the proposed strategy, Sustainability Appraisals, as required by the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations (The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004), ensure the potential environmental effects are given full consideration alongside social and economic issues, and so the strategy can be considered sustainable per the objectives set out in paragraph 8 of the NPPF.

The Interim Sustainability Appraisal recognises the confirmed sustainability and suitability for development of Land at Northeye, as indicated by its existing allocation (DaSA Policy BEX10), and provides the justification for increasing the capacity of the site from 140 dwellings.

However, it is noted that whilst the HELAA (Part 2 Site Assessments) considers the three parcels of draft policy BX28 (BEX0007, BEX0103, BEX0119) individually, the Interim Sustainability Appraisal assesses all three sites together. In doing so, it is not possible to assess the differing characteristics and standalone merits of each parcel (as outlined in the HELAA) against the SA objectives.

Instead, by not considering the sites individually in the Interim Sustainability Appraisal, the proposed allocation of these parcels under Policy BX28 appears to be a result of their similar location and shared boundaries, rather than following the conclusion that this would be justified, deliverable, that there are benefits of doing this, or this was the most sustainable option.

By collectively assessing the three parcels within the draft allocation against the SA objectives, it cannot be concluded that the approach of combining the sites into one allocation is the most appropriate format for their allocation (one allocation, rather than separate allocations for each parcel). It could be that the Site Assessment score of BX28 is worse than that for the individual parcels if assessed separately, due to their limited interrelationship and likely independent delivery, and so it would be more appropriate to have individual allocations for each parcel.

We believe the Sustainability Appraisal should be updated to re-assess the sites on an individual basis, to ensure the Plan is based on a sound evidence base, per NPPF paragraph 36, promoting the effectiveness of the Plan.

Furthermore, as set out in our previous Call for Sites submission, it is considered that were the Land at Northeye to be assessed individually, it would score positively and further confirm within the evidence the suitability of the site as a draft allocation that can achieve independent early delivery of homes.

## Other Comments

*Question 69 – Are there any other issues, options or other matters you would like to raise?*

As highlighted in our response to other questions, to ensure the proposed Local Plan policies accurately reflect local development (housing and infrastructure) needs, the Sustainability Appraisal and Infrastructure Delivery Plan should be updated to consider all background evidence base documents prepared in association with the emerging Local Plan.

### Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)

As noted previously in our response to question 5 in relation to infrastructure requirements and priorities, we welcome the positive assessment of Land at Northeye in the HELAA (ref. BEX0007) and recognition that it would be possible and appropriate to increase the number of dwellings that can be accommodated on the site from the existing allocation (adopted policy ref. BEX10), recognising the provision of a sports pitch on the site may no longer be appropriate. However, despite this positive assessment, this is not reflected across the wider evidence base documents, with the HELAA (ref. BEX0007, page 33) stating “further work will be required to ascertain whether the sports pitches could still be accommodated here or at an alternative suitable location”; this work has not been carried out at this stage, yet the IDP and draft policy wording in relation to BX28 assumes that the sports pitch remains justified.

As such, and per our response to question 5 of this consultation, the further evidence referred to as necessary should be prepared to show due consideration to all potential options, and feed into the IDP and draft policy wording to confirm it is appropriate, per paragraph 36 of the NPPF.

As set out in response to Question 23, we recommend an amendment to the wording provided in the HELAA, stating that the north-western part of the site should be avoided for development due to its location within Flood Zone 3 and the presence of Priority Habitat. Although the north-western part of the site may be subject to additional site constraints, the HELAA should provide a factual note of this, rather than concluding this area as unsuitable. Instead, this is a matter for assessment at planning application stage. This approach would ensure the assessment of the site is not prejudiced at this stage. This will facilitate the positive preparation of the Plan and ensure allocations can be brought forward in an effective way, in line with the requirements for plan making outlined in paragraph 36 of the NPPF.

## 4. Summary and Conclusions

These representations are made alongside the commencement of pre-application discussions taking place with RDC and local stakeholders following the acquisition of the site by Homes England. Over the coming months, technical work will be progressing to inform the submission of a future planning application in 2027. We are happy to provide the outcomes of this technical work to support the ongoing updated allocation of this site through the emerging Local Plan.

The Land at Northeye (HELAA ref. BEX0007) site is sustainably located, available and deliverable for residential development in the short term. Enabling the early delivery of homes on this established Local Plan allocation is crucial to ensure the vision and objectives of the emerging Local Plan are met and is consistent with NPPF policies around prioritising and maximising opportunities from previously developed sites. To achieve this, supporting policies in the emerging Local Plan should facilitate the early delivery of the site and optimisation of opportunities to increase its capacity from that of the current DaSA allocation (adopted policy ref. BEX10).

As outlined in these representations, adequate flexibility should be introduced to draft policies BX18 and BX28 to enable full exploration of all opportunities on site to optimise housing numbers and ensure early delivery. Specifically, as referenced in the HELAA (ref. BEX0007, page 33), we recommend that further work is undertaken to create a comprehensive sports facility strategy for the West Bexhill Growth Area, that will provide optimum chance of success and uptake from local sports groups (rather than providing a piecemeal approach), and ensure the efficient use of land avoiding duplication of facilities at each site. The draft policy wording should be updated accordingly to reflect the specific infrastructure needs of Land at Northeye.

For the plan to be effective in maximising housing delivery, there are required updates to the evidence base (including the HELAA, Sustainability Appraisal and IDP), and corresponding amendments to the wording of draft policies to ensure specific site constraints are recognised and for sites to remain viable, alongside updates to the IDP to ensure clarity over funding for any infrastructure identified.

We are fully supportive of the proposed re-allocation of Land at Northeye and welcome the opportunity to work alongside the Council throughout the preparation of the emerging Local Plan (and forthcoming planning application) to ensure the strategy (and policies to meet this) are robust, deliverable and sound, to deliver the much-needed homes across the District.

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