



## Rother District Council Draft Local Plan Consultation

### Beckley Parish Council Response

Beckley has been described by a number of planning inspectors considering appeals to be a village characterised by gaps in the housing and having very few amenities. It isn't even possible to purchase milk in the village. Therefore families are required to travel by car for many of their basic requirements, thereby challenging the District Council's premise that development should be "green to the core".

Beckley Parish Council appreciates that it's vital for there to be starter / young family homes to ensure that the village flourishes. It is therefore in principal supportive of housing development that is sympathetic to the rural environment. This means that it has a density that is similar to the existing village buildings and that development sites are small and spread throughout the village to maintain the existing environment.

We would like the following specific comments to be taken into account:

- **5.23 figure 9** proposed densities

Villages with development boundaries	25–45 dph (avg. 35)
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This proposal is significantly more dense than current village housing in general and in Beckley would alter the character of the village making the new developments stand out rather than blend in. We consider that 25 DPH is a more appropriate maximum density, the average being below this. The same observations apply throughout the document where this is the premise for development densities.

- **6.60 Figure 23**

Beckley	20	33	53
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The 165% increase in the allocation of future housing targets to Beckley represents a very significant increase and the total of 53 is circa a 10% increase in the current number of households. In a village with very limited amenities this appears disproportionate and will negatively impact the character of the village in an AONB.

- **Proposed development for Beckley & Four Oaks**

- **BC1** - the Parish Council is in discussions with HASTOE with a view to developing up to 9 affordable homes on the field behind the current Buddens Green site. BC1 looks to extend this site to accommodate 20 homes by extending into the neighbouring field. Beckley Parish Council is concerned about this due to:
  - The extensive flooding that is experienced in the field next to Buddens Green as during winter the pond increases to an extent that the proposed site would be extensively flooded. See appendix 1 for photographs which evidence the extent of the flooding and the volume of water already being displaced across the road which would be exacerbated should the scope for flooding within the field be reduced. Any significant work to manage the water and speed up its removal will undoubtedly lead to flooding of properties across the road on route to the ditch which drains this area of the village behind the houses on the northern side to the road.
  - The concentration of 20 houses in addition to the 12 already in Buddens Green will change the nature of this central location within the village. As has been stated previously the Parish Council would prefer more numerous but smaller developments throughout the village eg along the lanes as well as Main Street.
- **BC2** - the proposed site in Hobbs Lane is partially a brownfield site, but has significant challenges that need to be taken into account
  - The proposed density is too high, and previous plans have not adequately catered for the number of vehicles that the scheme would generate. Hobbs Lane is the access to 108 homes as well as having local business. There is significant parking along the road since the rural nature of the village and restricted bus services (which are due to be reduced further) requires households to have multiple vehicles. Also, the houses on the A268 known as Roberts Row do not have off road parking and it isn't possible to safely park on the main road, so they are forced to use Hobbs Lane. Therefore this is already very congested. A lower density of housing should be applied to ensure that there is sufficient parking in any scheme to not further exacerbate an existing issue.
  - The plan's observations about the site specify that a footway would be required. A footway of the statutory width would halve the size of the already narrow lane, and therefore isn't viable.
  - The site marked includes the property named Donkey Lodge, which the current owner has no inclination to sell, and this appears to be pivotal to developing the site.
  - The narrow road and dense parking from the site to the junction with the A268 mean that the housing development would have an adverse impact on the local businesses during any development, thereby threatening their viability.
  - The amenities within the village are located in Main Street. Therefore anyone from the development would need to cross the A268, and there is no traffic island to protect pedestrians.
  - It is 1/4 mile from the proposed site to the bus stop for the school bus, requiring children to cross the busy main road, and circa 1.5 miles to the recreation ground, pre school and primary school. Therefore development on this site would increase car journeys, undermining the green ethos of Rother District Council.

- The local infrastructure is inadequate to cope with the existing population of Hobbs Lane. There were power outages in the summer of 2025 as demand exceeded the capacity of the local infrastructure, and the site is below the level of the sewerage treatment works therefore without significant upgrade, which has not been muted, there will be repeats of the sewerage works overflowing as shown in appendix 2.
- **BC3** - this is a welcome example of spacing development through the village. However, the proposed density will mean that there is unlikely to be sufficient parking and would result in additional parking and congestion on Main Street. The Parish Council would therefore consider that a development of 8 houses would be more in keeping.

The Parish Council would welcome the opportunity to work with the District Council to identify sites around the village that could be used to meet the quota of houses allocated to the village to make up for the lower density proposed for these sites.

There are sites on Kings Bank, Horseshoe Lane, Church Lane, Rectory Lane and Stoddards Lane, which whilst currently outside the development boundaries, would allow for small pockets of houses to be built in order to meet the targets placed on the village, whilst minimising traffic impacts on the relevant lanes and reflecting the way in which the village has evolved historically.

#### **Appendix 1 - Evidence of flooding on site BC1**





Expanded pond due to rain falling on the catchment area.



Volume of water flowing over Main Street



Appendix 2 - the Beckley sewerage unable to handle existing volumes.

