

Planning Policy Team
Rother District Council
Town Hall
London Road
Bexhill-on-Sea
East Sussex
TN39 3JX

By email only: draftlocalplan@rother.gov.uk

20th March 2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

ROTHER LOCAL PLAN 2025 - 2042

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Rother Local Plan. We are responding on behalf of the landowners of Wild Meadows, Chapel Lane, Guestling Green.

We note that our client's site (HELAA reference GUE0012) is identified as a draft allocation for some 20 new dwellings under Policy GU3 and strongly support the inclusion of the site as a suitable site for new residential development.

The site is well located on the edge of the existing built-up area boundary, large enough to deliver a beneficial number of new homes – including affordable housing – close to the village Primary School and other services – as well as new local community infrastructure (in the form of a public open space) within the site.

There are clear benefits from the delivery of new homes in Guestling Green, including supporting the long-term viability of existing services within the village, and allowing local residents to remain within the village (or those with a local connection to return to the village).

Our comments therefore relate to the policy text and other provisions within the draft Plan that we believe can be strengthened in the next iteration of the draft Local Plan document.

Quantum of Development

The policy text describes the site as being allocated for “*some 20 new dwellings*”. This figure is based on an indicative developable area of 0.55 hectares (within a wider site of 1.1 hectares) at a density of 35 dwellings per hectare.

It should be noted that our initial consultation response (dated 2nd October 2023) confirmed the total site area to be 1.5 hectares in size, with a developable area of 1.1 hectares. In our view the site could therefore deliver a higher quantum of development whilst still complying with the indicative density and other considerations identified within the draft policy.

Notwithstanding this, even if the Council wishes to retain the 20-unit figure within the policy, this should be expressed as a “*minimum of 20 new dwellings*”. This would ensure that it is clear that a higher quantum of development could be tested at application stage (provided that other considerations are satisfactorily addressed) and we consider this wording to be appropriate in light of the Council’s residual unmet housing need.

Proposed Development

As previously addressed in our call for sites submission and comments on the 2024 Local Plan consultation, the site is suitable, available and achievable for a residential-led development of at least 20 new homes.

The access arrangements for the proposed development were considered as part of an earlier appeal on the site and the creation of a new access from Chapel Lane was found to be consistent with the prevailing character of the area with only localised impacts from the loss of boundary planting.

The Council's Rural Settlement Study identified Guestling Green as a settlement with a high 'service level indicator' score for a settlement of its size and the village notably benefits from both a Primary School and good access to bus services.

New development could be sustainably located within the village, whilst also delivering additional infrastructure for the benefit of all residents. The site would provide a natural extension to the built-up area of Guestling Green and is surrounded by existing development within the village on three sides.

Active Travel and Highways

Two potential points of access were identified, either utilising the existing access into the site or the creation of a new access towards the southern end of the site. Following consultation with East Sussex County Council highways it has been determined that a new access is preferable. The junction design for the proposed new junction has been informed by a detailed traffic and speed survey, and was found to be acceptable by the local highways authority under application RR/2021/2348/P.

The proposal also offers the ability to create an off-carriageway walking route adjacent to Chapel Lane to improve the pedestrian environment between existing dwellings and village services and facilities to the north-west, including Guestling Bradshaw CEP School, improving highway safety for all users.

The site has previously been subject to planning consents for a commercial livery and all-weather arena that generated high volumes of vehicle trips to the site on a daily basis. Although this commercial livery use has now ceased, the quantum of residential uses proposed would be comparable to the historic trip generation associated with the site, but would offer an improved access and segregated pedestrian footway – providing a wider benefit to highway safety.

Constraints and Opportunities

Aside from the National Landscape designation (affecting 83% of the district) there are no site-specific constraints that would impact upon the suitability or deliverability of the site. The site has been used for equestrian/grazing purposes and has no notable landscape character or value, nor historic or ecological interest.

The site was subject to a preliminary ecological appraisal in September 2021, which found that the developable area of the site was of low ecological value. Buildings within the site were found to have low/negligible potential for roosting bats due to their age and condition and there were no signs of roosting bats onsite. General mitigation and enhancement measures were recommended alongside an updated site walkover prior to works.

The site is located within Flood Zone 1 (lowest risk of fluvial flooding). The site and wider property are not located within any designated flood risk areas for surface water or reservoir flooding (based on Environment Agency mapping). The redevelopment of the site would consider surface water drainage in a comprehensive way.

The site adjoins the existing settlement edge and is surrounded by existing development on three sides.

Infrastructure

The indicative proposals show that the site can comfortably accommodate the scale of development proposed alongside associated community infrastructure including new walking routes, public open space and a children's playspace.

The County Council's School Organisation Plan for 2025 to 2029 shows that primary numbers for the Rural Rother planning area are anticipated to fall consistently year-on-year, with surplus places across the Rural Rother area rising from 126 in 2017/18 to 550 in 2028/29, demonstrating existing capacity

within the system. The County Council's Small Schools Policy is to help small schools within the community remain sustainable, however the delivery of new family sized housing within the village will improve demand for school spaces and improve the long-term viability of the Primary School, providing a wider social sustainability benefit.

In addition to the onsite infrastructure proposed, the development will also contribute towards wider community infrastructure upgrades through the Council's adopted Community Infrastructure Levy and will deliver new affordable homes (including homes for those with a local connection on the local housing register) in accordance with policy requirements.

Yours sincerely,



Joseph Pearson MRTPI

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