

Your ref: |
Our ref: 6.3/Neighbourhood Plans
Please ask for: Nichola Watters
Direct dial no: (01424) 787637
Date: 20 May 2019 |



BY EMAIL ONLY: moles.consultancy@gmail.com

**Dr Anthony Leonard
Executive Director**

Town Hall
Bexhill-on-Sea
East Sussex TN39 3JX

Dear Donna

Update on progress with Hurst Green Neighbourhood Plans

Thank you for your email updating progress on the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) under preparation for Battle. It is noted that the timetable for the production of the Hurst Green Neighbourhood Plan have slipped since the last update obtained from you in February 2019. There are serious concerns that Hurst Green NP will not reach Examination prior to Autumn 2019 by which time the Rother District Council Core Strategy will be 5 years old. As previously advised by the former Planning Policy Manager - David Marlow with the most recent communication being in November 2018, under these circumstances there is considered to be little prospect of this NP being successful at examination due to the need to review the development targets within the Core Strategy. A review of the Core Strategy is commencing this summer and it will invariably include higher housing figures for the District which will not be reflected in the Hurst Green NP.

Over the last 2 years Rother District Council has advised those Parishes undertaking Neighbourhood Plans of the fast approaching requirement to review the Core Strategy Ticehurst, Crowhurst and Rye have all responded positively and accelerated progress on their plans going through successful Examinations in early 2019. As a result these NPs are likely to go to referendum in June 2019 and if successful, will move forward to be 'made' shortly thereafter.

In terms of progressing with a Neighbourhood Plan now in Battle, it is difficult at this point to advise what an appropriate course of action is going forward. As explained above, it is considered highly unlikely that proceeding with a Neighbourhood Plan which meets the existing target set out in the Core Strategy will be considered to meet the statutory basic conditions as the Core Strategy will be more than 5 years old after 29 September 2019. As you will appreciate, the basic conditions, as set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, include the requirement that NPs must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area (or any part of that area).

In order to deal with this unfortunate delay in the production of NP, the submitted DaSA includes Policy OVE1 to deal with such contingencies which you will already be aware of and it states that:



Policy OVE1: Housing supply and delivery pending plans

Housing sites sufficient to meet the Core Strategy requirement of at least 5,700 net additional homes over the period to 2028 will be met by allocations and other provisions in this Plan and Neighbourhood Plans.

No phasing restrictions will be imposed on development allocations, other than for site-specific, normally infrastructure, reasons.

Until such time as a Neighbourhood Plan for the relevant settlement with an outstanding Core Strategy housing requirement is in force, planning applications will be favourably considered for development proposals in those settlements where:

- (i) they contribute to meeting the housing target for that settlement and accord with the relevant spatial strategy; and**
- (ii) the site and development proposals are otherwise suitable having regard to other relevant policies of the Core Strategy, including the considerations in OSS2 and OSS3, and of this Plan.**

The current timetable for the production of the Hurst Green NP indicates that submission of a Plan to the District Council is likely to be in August 2019, which means that the Regulation 16 consultation could run beyond the 5 year timeframe from adoption of the Core Strategy. It is therefore considered that proceeding in this manner could come with real risks of the NP not meeting the statutory basic conditions. In the event of such a finding being made, the appointed Examiner would not be able to recommend that the NP can proceed to referendum.

However, notwithstanding the above view, it is considered that continuing the preparation work for the Regulation 14 consultation (including relevant surveys, evidence base gathering and draft plan work) can still proceed in line with your previously advised timetables. If the Regulation 14 consultation is used to invite additional sites which could contribute towards meeting further development to take on board the increase in District housing targets set out in the Government's new standard methodology, which will be subject to the Local Plan Review. The outcome of this work from the NP Regulation 14 consultation can then be used to inform the NP which could progress in tandem with the Local Plan Review. This will allow coordination between Plans and for them to work in a complementary way.

You will appreciate that there is considerable concern that the delay to the NP will result in site allocations missing from the parish. The outcome of this may result in speculative housing proposal pressures on sites which the Parish Council and residents were seeking to protect. However, in order to ensure the statutory requirements are met, it is difficult to see a way forward in the short term other than producing a draft plan with all elements prepared to which final site allocations can be added to the NP prior to submission to the District Council under Regulation 15 to reflect the new development targets set out in the Local Plan Review when they are available.

The District Council will continue to work positively and constructively with you as Advisor to the NP Group to bring their Plan forward. I would appreciate it if you will discuss this letter and its contents with the Group and inform me as a matter of urgency how they wish to proceed.



Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Hickling". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a simple rectangular border.

Tim Hickling MRTPI MCMI
Head of Service – Strategy & Planning

