

HORSTED KEYNES NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

HOUSING JUSTIFICATION PAPER

FEBRUARY 2017

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This paper considers the spatial strategy contained in the Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan (HKNP), Submission Version February 2017, and the degree to which it addresses the Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAHN) as detailed in the Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) document 'Housing and Employment Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA)', March 2015.
- 1.2 The OAHN for the District is 11,162 new homes up to 2031. The draft OAN for Horsted Keynes parish is an average of 120 new homes over the same period. The HKNP proposes the following housing allocations:
- Police House Field (Ref. HKNP002) for 10 dwellings.
 - Land at Jeffreys Farm (Ref. HKNP013) for 6 dwellings.
 - Land at Westall House (Ref. HKNP028) for 8 dwellings (specifically extra care apartments).
- 1.3 These collectively would provide 24 dwellings. When combined with the five completions and an existing planning permission for 12 dwellings at Ravenswood this totals 41 dwellings. Based on the OAN, this is a shortfall of 79 dwellings.
- 1.4 It should be noted that Policy HK1 (Built up area boundary) permits small scale housing developments of up to 10 units on sites adjacent to the built up area boundary where the development meets certain criteria. As such, the HKNP does allow for higher levels of housing development than the three allocations and other small scale windfalls that may come forward (and which have averaged approximately two dwellings per year between 1984 and 2014).
- 1.5 This paper specifically considers the reasons why the HKNP does not consider that seeking to meet the OAHN in full for Horsted Keynes parish represents a sustainable approach.

2.0 Landscape

- 2.1 The whole of the village is within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that:
- "Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty."*
- 2.2 In particular, the land to the west of the village does fall away and offer longer distance views across the AONB, both to and from Horsted Keynes village. Development in this area, particularly larger scale development, is likely to have a detrimental impact on the AONB unless it can be very well screened. This would have relevance to developments off Sugar Lane.

2.3 To the north and east of the village, the impact of development on the AONB would be less, with the land generally less sensitive to development.

3.0 Conservation and heritage

3.1 The Conservation Area covers the eastern part of the village. The majority of the listed buildings within the village are also located here. In particular, the extension of the Conservation Area along Church Lane, encompassing the primary school and St Giles Church is particularly sensitive to development. Development around this area to the north of the main built up part of Horsted Keynes would impact on the setting of the church and the views of the countryside.

3.2 This does serve to limit the amount of development that could come forward to the north of the existing built up area.

3.3 One of the historic features of the High Weald AONB is its medieval field patterns, many of which are still intact. Some of these preserved fields are located adjacent to the built up area boundary so development could destroy these heritage features if the field patterns are lost.

4.0 Sustainability Hierarchy of Settlements

4.1 Horsted Keynes is a Category 3 settlement, as defined in the MSDC District Plan, Submission Version 2016. This states that Category 3 settlements are:

"Medium sized villages providing essential services for the needs of their own residents and immediate surrounding communities. Whilst more limited, these can include key services such as primary schools, shops, recreation and community facilities, often shared with neighbouring settlements."

4.2 Firstly, there are very few surrounding communities that Horsted Keynes serves. Most are nearer to larger centres such as Haywards Heath and Ardingly. Horsted Keynes has a primary school, three small community facilities, a shop, three pubs and a village green. There are concerns that the local shop will close and follow the Post Office which closed in 2014. As such, the village has very limited facilities to serve the needs of the community and one of the objectives of the HKNP is to 'maintain and enhance existing and establish new local services and facilities.'

4.3 Whilst growth in the population would help to support and sustain local services, it is unlikely that even meeting the OAHN in full would provide certainty that existing services (for example, the shop and the pubs) or any new services would remain viable over the lifetime of the plan. In respect of the primary school, the current number on roll is approximately 120 compared with a capacity of 150. Given that all schools are recommended to retain a small buffer then this would mean potential capacity for an additional 20 pupils, or three per year group. Meeting the OAHN in full would be likely to result in growth in the number of additional primary school-age children living in the village exceeding the capacity of the school. This would give it little potential to adapt to changing circumstances.

- 4.4 It should also be noted that, in 2016, around 22% of the children attending the school came from outside the parish, although a large number of these children lived close to the parish boundary. This is a relatively low proportion of children coming from outside the parish.
- 4.5 Horsted Keynes is a rural village, as reflected in its role on the settlement hierarchy. In order to meet the OAHN in full, development would need to be supported on at least one large site of at least 40 dwellings. Such a development would harm the character of the village.

5.0 Availability/sustainability of sites

- 5.1 The HKNP Call for Sites process brought forward a large number of sites for development. This included all sites that had been put forward to the MSDC Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) process. These sites were then subjected to a sustainability appraisal and this is contained within the HKNP Sustainability Appraisal document which is part of the suite of Submission Stage documents.
- 5.2 Whilst there were a large number of sites, a number were considered to be either unavailable or undeliverable or unsustainable because they were remote from Horsted Keynes village. One was also considered to be too small to merit allocation. This resulted in 13 sites being considered, as well as a site that represented an amalgamation of four of the 13 sites.
- 5.3 Of these 14 site options, eight were assessed as being unsustainable. This therefore only left the following sites:
- 001 - Land at end of Church Lane - approximately 5-7 dwellings
 - 002 - Police House Field - approximately 5-7 dwellings
 - 012 - The Old Rectory – approximately 10 dwellings
 - 013 - Jeffreys Farm Buildings - approximately 5-10 dwellings
 - 028 - Land at Westall House - approximately 15-20 dwellings
 - 029 – Sugar Lane amalgamated sites - approximately 40 dwellings
- 5.4 Further consultation with West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) Highways Authority raised concerns over safety in respect of Site 001 and access/safety in respect of Site 012, which was sufficient to dismiss them as alternatives.
- 5.5 Site 029 was considered to be sustainable as an individual site but the community had significant concerns about the scale of development and how this would materially change the character of the village. In particular, the significant breaching of the strong defensible boundary created by Sugar Lane that would occur through the development of the site was raised by many in the community. Specific concerns were also raised about the significant loss of mature trees and hedgerows on the eastern boundary in order to provide vehicular access and certain matters relating to traffic flows. The site was therefore not allocated for these reasons.
- 5.6 This therefore only left three sites – 002, 013 and 028 – which were all allocated in the HKNP.

6.0 Demographics

- 6.1 The analysis in Appendix A to the HKNP Submission Version shows the following:
- In 2011, the population of the parish was 1,586. Compared with Mid Sussex district, it has a low proportion of both young adults aged 16-24 and adults between 25 and 44 years of age.
 - By contrast, the parish has a high proportion of adults aged 45 to 64, suggesting that a good number of people will be approaching retirement age over the plan period.
 - Since 2001, the population has grown by 79 people, a 5.2% change compared to 9.8% growth in the district as a whole. This is reflective of Horsted Keynes's role in the district as a small rural settlement.
 - Most of the growth in population between 2001 and 2011 came from those aged 65 and over. By contrast, the number of young people between 16 and 44 fell considerably.
 - Horsted Keynes has a comparatively high proportion of couples with no dependent children, which is largely made up of retirees.
- 6.2 One of the challenges recognised by the HKNP is that the ageing population has particular demands in terms of their accessibility to services and appropriate recreational facilities. The loss of facilities such as the Post Office, has a particularly significant impact on older people, many of whom find it difficult to adapt to the new ways of accessing such services on the internet.
- 6.3 One of the objectives of the HKNP was to 'meet Horsted Keynes's housing needs over the plan period with emphasis on housing that addresses the needs of younger people and families to help maintain the village age profile.' So the HKNP has a dual role of seeking to address the needs of the older population by seeking to retain services, whilst trying to encourage younger people in by providing sufficient housing to meet their needs (which would predominantly be smaller housing). Discussion of the limited ability of the HKNP to support rural services, irrespective of whether it meets its OAHN in full or not, is presented in Section 4.
- 6.4 Allocating a larger amount of housing in the HKNP, and so getting closer to meeting the OAHN in full, would clearly provide more certainty that there would be the range of housing to meet the needs of the community and specifically help more younger people to live in Horsted Keynes village. However, it is equally important that the housing that is provided is of the right type. In this regard, Policy HK2 (Dwelling size) ensures that at least 50% of the dwellings that are built will be smaller dwellings. Whilst such a policy would still be in place if more/larger sites were allocated, this does help to ensure that this objective is addressed.
- 6.5 The approach in the HKNP also helps to ensure that the primary school is not flooded with new pupils in a very short space of time. A large development of 30-40 dwellings would reasonably be expected to be built out and occupied within two years. As such, the additional children that such development would create would be looking to occupy new school places over that same two-year period. This would represent a major change for a small rural school and may result in children being unable to access school places at the primary school if a particular year group is full.

6.6 It is also important to note that Policy HK1 (Built up area boundary) does permit small development adjacent to the built up area boundary on unallocated sites. Therefore, there is likely to be further development on sites that are not identified in the HKNP which goes further towards meeting OAHN and also helps to contribute a greater proportion of smaller housing units that are sought. This would be expected to provide new housing units more steadily over the plan period than if one or more large sites were allocated, meaning that local services are more able to adjust to the changes in demand.

7.0 Summary

7.1 Overall it is considered that the sites allocated in the HKNP, coupled with the flexible approach permitting smaller sites adjacent to the built up area boundary (subject to addressing certain criteria) will result in the OAHN nearly being reached but more importantly, a sustainable strategy for growth in Horsted Keynes. This reflects the fact that the village sits in the High Weald AONB and has a significant character which is based largely on its scale. It also reflects the limited range of services and its role in the settlement hierarchy.