

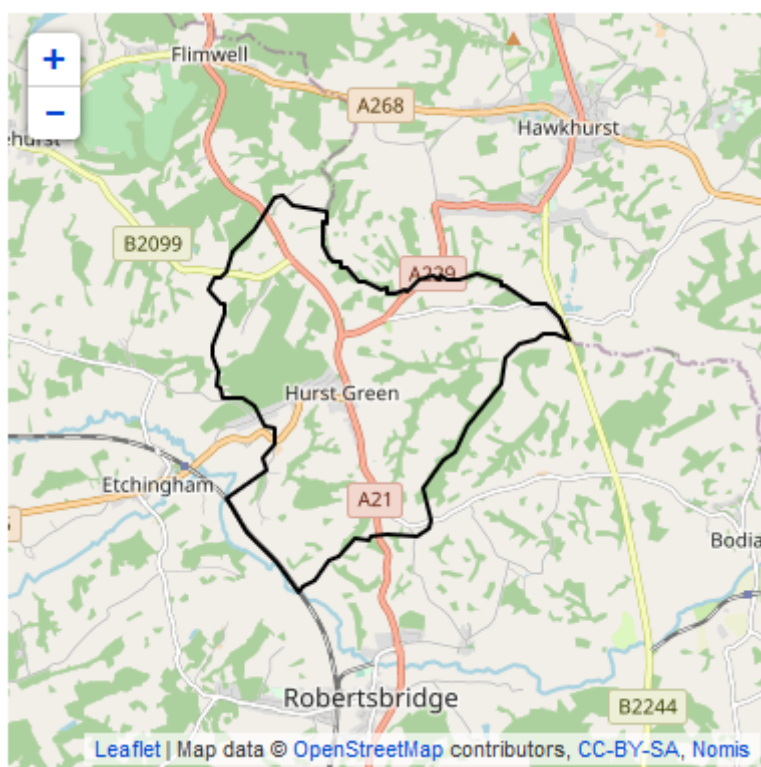
HURST GREEN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – INVITATION TO TENDER (ITT) for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: Brief to consultants

Hurst Green Parish Council (HGPC) is in the process of developing a neighbourhood development plan for the parish. It intends to allocate sites suitable for housing and has undertaken an initial, high level set of site assessments of potential sites.

The parish has developed a shortlist of potentially suitable sites and is seeking suitably qualified consultants to undertake a two-stage landscape and visual impact assessment of these, in order to refine the site list and inform allocation policies.

About Hurst Green

Hurst Green is a rural parish located within the Rother District Council (RDC) local authority area in East Sussex. *Consultants should note, Hurst Green's location, and should not be confused with its namesakes in Surrey and Lancashire.*



Its population in 2011 was 1,481 persons living in 628 dwellings. It was designated as a neighbourhood area on 8 June 2017 by RDC. The parish is located in the northern part of Rother District, just west of the border between East Sussex and Kent. The parish is predominantly rural in character and sits fully within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The landscape reflects that of the AONB, comprising a mix of scattered farmsteads, small woodlands (some ancient woodland), irregular-shaped fields, open heaths and ancient routeways.

The principal settlement in the parish is Hurst Green village, located towards the centre and arranged largely in a largely linear fashion along the main A21, with further developments branching west towards Etchingham, mostly along the A265. RDC's Core Strategy classifies Hurst Green as a 'Local Service Village' within the Rural Areas section of the Core Strategy. Hurst Green village is the only settlement

within the parish that has a development boundary¹. Local facilities include a school, village hall, church, a recreational area and some small shops and a public house; these are fairly spread out within the village. Notably, the A21, the main route between London and Hastings, cuts directly through the village. This is a busy thoroughfare with limited crossing points, exacerbated by the A265, which starts at the village and leads west to Etchingham and beyond. The village is noted for its large number of listed buildings, including a series of large country houses.

The other principal settlements in the parish are the hamlets of Silver Hill to the south and Swiftsden to the north, both situated on the A21. The remainder of the neighbourhood area consists of a very attractive agricultural hinterland, where the AONB provides an attractive backcloth to the elements of built development. There is a ridgeway track that runs through Hurst Green via Etchingham to Heathfield, dating to Iron Age times, as well as a series of more local footpath networks.

Background to housing in the parish

The Neighbourhood Development Plan for Hurst Green is being prepared in the context of the adopted Rother Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and saved policies from the Local Plan (2006). The Rother Local Plan Core Strategy sets a target for the delivery of 5,700 dwellings in the District over the Plan period to 2028 and suggests that within Hurst Green there are sites with the potential to deliver 75 homes².

The allocation of sites is intended to be undertaken via the Hurst Green Neighbourhood Plan. To inform this process, HGPC contracted AECOM to undertake a high-level assessment of potential sites for development where sites were identified through two Call for Sites exercises undertaken by HGPC; a review of RDC's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment; and other sites known to RDC.

The AECOM Site Assessments Report³ was published in 2019. Since then, however, further sites have been put forward for consideration. These have been subject to assessment by HGPC's Neighbourhood Plan consultants following the methodology of the AECOM assessments; an up-to-date summary of the findings are contained in The Hurst Green Neighbourhood Plan Site Assessments Summary Report (July 2020), attached to this brief. This also presents a summary of the original AECOM findings, in order to present a long list of approximately 13 sites considered potentially suitable for development.

None of the sites are completely free from constraints, which are predominantly landscape related due to their potential impact on the AONB.

More information about the Hurst Green neighbourhood plan, and further accompanying documents, can be found at: hurstgreen2030.uk

¹ <https://www.rother.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Inset20.pdf>

² See Policy RA1 and Figure 12 of the adopted Core Strategy (2014), available at: https://www.rother.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Adopted_Core_Strategy_September_2014.pdf The figure of 75 homes is also carried forwards in the Development and Site Allocations Local Plan (2019) see Policy OVE1 (p.115) and Figure 17 (p.112), available at: https://www.rother.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/DaSA_Adopted_December_2019_Web.pdf

³ [Hurst Green Neighbourhood Development Plan Site Options and Assessment, AECOM, May 2019](#)

Scope of the work to be undertaken by the consultants

The purpose of this brief is to seek experienced consultants to prepare and undertake landscape and visual impacts assessments of 12 sites and provide conclusions about which would be suitable for allocation, setting out appropriate mitigation measures required. The information provided will be used by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to inform discussions with site owners, with a view to including site allocations within the neighbourhood plan. Therefore, familiarity with neighbourhood plan site allocation policies is essential.

The specific tasks are:

Stage 1: High-level assessment of sites

To undertake an initial high-level landscape and visual impact assessment of the long-list of 12 sites to determine if any of the sites can be immediately excluded from further work. This will include a consideration of whether smaller parts of individual sites might be suitable for further assessment, as opposed to the whole site. In all cases, clear justification must be provided for all or part of a site being excluded on landscape/visual impact grounds. It is expected that a site visit will be required to undertake Stage 1 and this should be included in the fee proposal. Access to sites will be possible during daylight hours, and if required members of the Steering Group or from the Parish Council will be available to assist with location/access.

The outcome of Stage 1 will be a summary of the findings of the high-level assessment, giving details about how the sites have been assessed and the findings. In addition, the preparation of a short-list of sites to be considered at Stage 2.

Stage 2: Detailed assessment of the short-list of sites

To undertake detailed assessments of the short-list of sites (including partial sites, where these have been identified), in order to present a conclusion for each on its suitability for development. Where mitigation measures are required, the nature of these should be identified. Specific recommendations for particular site allocation policy requirements should be included.

Timetable

It is anticipated that the contract will be awarded during w/c 21st September, with work to be completed by 31st October 2020.

Fee Proposal

Suitably qualified consultants are requested to e-mail the Parish Clerk, Janet Ellis, with their proposal to carry out this work at clerk@hurstgreen-pc.org.uk.

Please use the subject header: "Fee proposal for Hurst Green Neighbourhood Plan – site assessments"

Proposals should include the consultants' methodology/ approach to be used. Whilst HGPC's view on what is required is detailed above, we would wish consultants to bring their experience to this matter and include within their proposals any matters which they do not consider are being addressed in this document, but that will be an important part of the final output. As such, whilst every endeavour has been made to give tenderers an accurate description of our requirement, tenderers should make their own assessment about the methods and resources needed to meet those requirements.

Consultants are requested to provide a quotation for this work, showing a day rate and the number of days which they envisage would be involved in undertaking this work. This should be broken down and presented as follows:

- a fixed fee for Part 1 (including site visits)
- a fixed fee for the evaluation of a single site in Part 2. The final fee for the study will be based on the number of sites that are included in Part 2.

Disbursements for travel expenses etc. are not payable; any such expenses should be factored into the day rate quoted.

Expenses in relation to matters such as producing publicity material, hire charges for meeting rooms etc. are payable. Applicants are requested to list these as part of their quote and quantify these where possible.

Please provide a CV of the people who would work in relation to this contract and evidence of two examples of similar work undertaken. Please also provide the names and contact details (e-mail address and telephone number) of two previous clients who could be approached as references.

Please note the maximum day rate we will pay for any consultant is £550 per day.

The quote must disclose any known, or those that could be perceived to be by a reasonable third-party, any conflicts of interest, including being related to, in a relationship with, friends with, or any similar relationship with: any developer, agent, land owner, or anyone with an interest in any of the proposed sites, a councillor or employee of HGPC, or Rother District Council or East Sussex County Council. In addition, please provide details of your Personal Indemnity Cover.

Scanned copies of necessary insurance policies (professional indemnity and public liability) should also be included.

Should you have any queries or clarifications in relation to this matter please contact us by e-mail at: neighbourhood.plan.team@hurstgreen-pc.org.uk

The closing date for receipt of quotations is **5pm on Friday 4th September 2020**.

Decision making

HGPC will establish a short list based on a scored approach relating to the quality of the fee proposal (25%), past experience (40%), a demonstration of meeting Hurst Green's specific needs (25%) and cost (10%).

It is anticipated that the successful consultants will be contacted during w/c 14th September.

The Council is not bound to accept the lowest tender nor does it undertake to make an appointment from this exercise. The Council reserves the right to accept a portion of any tender, unless the tenderer expressly stipulates otherwise in their tender.

Freedom Of Information

The Parish Council is committed to open government and to meeting our responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Accordingly, all information submitted may need to be disclosed in response to a request under the Act. If you consider that any of the information included in your tender is commercially sensitive, please identify it and explain (in broad terms) what harm may result from disclosure if a request is received, and the time period applicable to that sensitivity. You should be aware that, even where you have indicated that information is commercially sensitive, we may still be required to disclose it under the Act if a request is received. Please also note that the receipt of any material marked 'confidential' or equivalent by us should not be taken to mean that we accept any duty of confidence by virtue of that marking. If a request is received, we may also be required to disclose details of unsuccessful tenders.