

Hurst Green Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2039
Pre-submission Draft Consultation (Regulation 14)

EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL RESPONSE, SEPTEMBER 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Hurst Green Neighbourhood Plan. The following are officer comments from East Sussex County Council (ESCC) which have been sub-divided into the respective disciplines for ease of reference. Where appropriate the specific section, policy or document within the consultation documents has been referred to.

If you have any queries on the County Council's comments, please contact:

Infrastructure Planning & Place Team
Communities, Economy & Transport
East Sussex County Council

1. Highways Authority

- 1.1 Transport challenges identified in the plan are agreed and noted.
- 1.2 Vision for the Neighbourhood Plan: **Travel and Transport** - We welcome proposals that help to create an environment that will encourage walking, cycling and low carbon transport over car-use, particularly for shorter journeys in and around the Parish. We will also work with partners to explore ways to reduce the impact of the A21 on the parish.
- 1.3 **Policy HG7** – consideration has been given to the public realm and the importance of improving access within the village by means of active travel. The use of wayfinding and signage is supported where appropriate, although where this could be introduced it should not clutter the local street environment and be sensitively located where a clear need has been identified. The provision of green space in the village is also supported. However, the provision and amount of car parking spaces should be carefully considered and balanced between improving walking and cycling connectivity to any new green space and recognising people may have no other option but to drive if travelling from further afield.
- 1.4 Para 9.7 which states '*Hurst Green's proximity to Etchingam Station should be promoted and there could be potential for bike hire and associated cycle parking, including for electric cycles (which could be particularly welcome given the steep hill between Etchingam and Hurst Green), to support improved sustainable connectivity between the station, accommodation and attractions and wider area*' is greatly supported. It is suggested that those wishing to take forward the plan refer to the East Sussex Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (September 2020) and liaise with the parish council and local planning authority to see whether any funding might be available to progress this, and to develop a case for such a scheme which might help with future funding opportunities to help deliver such initiatives.
- 1.5 Chapter 10 – Getting Around:
Careful consideration has been given in the Plan on how to improve pedestrian and cycling access and connectivity within the village including forthcoming housing development, as well to key destinations such as Etchingam Station to the west of Hurst Green.

- 1.6 The importance of providing safe access across the A21 is an issue which needs to be sensitively considered. This includes near Hurst Green School which is situated on the A21 and where parents park along this strategic road which creates conflict between parents at pick up and drop off times, and those travelling along the A21 for other purposes. The use of maps within the NP are a useful tool which provide a clear visual representation of what the NP is seeking to achieve in terms of walking and cycling connectivity improvements.
- 1.7 The inclusion of electric vehicle charging within the document is supported.
- 1.8 POLICY HGSA1: SITE ALLOCATION – COOKS FIELD, BURGH HILL (HG11) - A. (site proposed to be allocated for residential development with an estimated capacity of 7 dwellings).
- 1.9 The Cooks Field Site (HG11) is located on Burgh Hill, which mainly serves large, detached dwellings and has a speed limit of 30mph. There are limited footways and no dedicated passage for non-motorised users to reach the village where there are limited amenities/public transport on the A265 and A21. It should be recognised that there is limited scope to improve pedestrian facilities towards Station Road, unless third party land is acquired, which will mean that delivering “pedestrian access along Burgh Hill where none currently exists” (referencing para xi of the policy) may be difficult to achieve. Should this be the case, the development is likely to generate predominantly car-based trips.

3. Public Health

3.1 We welcome the emphasis the draft Neighbourhood Plan has on improving health and wellbeing and acknowledge that policies will have positive impacts, as concluded in the Strategic Environmental Assessment Report. We particularly welcome and support the strong approach to high quality design including reference to ‘Building for a Healthy Life’ and the proposed improvements to the public realm which will increase physical activity, reduce social isolation, and provide increased connections to nature. The following comments further highlight the links and strengthen the health and wellbeing benefits in the plan:

3.2 About Hurst Green

- a. Health intelligence should be weaved into the information on page 10 reflecting the characteristics of the community/local population including data on population demographics and health inequalities. Please refer to area profile on the East Sussex in Figures website for Hurst Green:
<https://www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk/webview/index.jsp?mode=area&submode=result&areaname=Hurst+Green&areatype=PA>

3.3 Vision and Objectives

- b. The challenges and opportunities facing the parish in paragraph 3.1 should include adapting and providing for an aging population and improving health and wellbeing particularly around mental health issues associated with social isolation and a lack of social cohesion within the villages.
- c. It is suggested that the vision and objectives could further highlight and make links to health and wellbeing by including the following additional text in bold:

3.4 Travel and Transport

*'We will support proposals that help to create an environment that will encourage walking, cycling and low carbon transport over car-use, particularly for shorter journeys in and around the Parish **improving both physical health and mental wellbeing**. We will also work with partners to explore ways to reduce the impact of the A21 on the parish.'*

3.5 Neighbourhood Plan Objectives

3) *To create an environment that encourages residents to live active, social, meaningful lives that promote good health and well-being. This includes bringing forward action on facilities and **public realm** improvements, which are needed by the village of Hurst Green; and the hamlets of Silver Hill and Swiftsden.*

4) *To improve the visual appearance and overall perception of Hurst Green as a place where people want to live, work and visit. This includes conserving and enhancing the built and historic environment and improving the general street scene and **connectivity** around the Parish.*

5) *To enhance our existing, and create new, open green spaces and improve access to the countryside. This includes identifying ways to support and enhance our biodiversity and **increase physical activity and mental wellbeing**.*

3.6 Policy HG5: Design of development

- d. It is suggested that as well as reference to the Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) principles reference is also included to the guidance by RTPI
<https://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/6374/dementiatownplanningpracticeadvice2020.pdf>
- e. Also to reflect older people's needs especially in relation to dementia reference in the supporting text could be made to the East Sussex Dementia Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
<http://www.eastsussexjsna.org.uk/JsnaSiteAspx/media/jsna-media/documents/comprehensiveneedsassessment/ESCCdementiaJSNAA.pdf>
- f. Policy and supporting text should refer to the health and wellbeing benefits of good neighbourhood design, both physical and mental. Proposals should reduce social isolation and improve social cohesion by providing places for people to meet.

3.7 Policy HG10: Green infrastructure

- g. The reference in the policy to benefits for local people should be expanded to include a requirement that green spaces are welcoming, safe and accessible for all.

3.8 Policy HG12: Protection of locally significant views

- h. The policy justification could include the mental health and wellbeing benefits of protecting and creating significant landscape views.

3.9 Policy HG13: A village hub for Hurst Green

- i. The policy proposals and Masterplan Objectives are supported and should emphasise the physical and mental health benefits of providing additional community facilities and connected accessible places for all to meet reducing social isolation and improving the social cohesion of the area.

3.10 Policy HG14: Sports and leisure facilities in Hurst Green

- j. The policy should require play and sports facilities for all ages and abilities.

3.11 Policy HG18: Encouraging sustainable movement

- k. The policy and supporting text should emphasise the physical and mental health benefits of increasing active travel in the area.

4. Broadband (Economy and Local Employment Opportunities)

4.1 In relation to improved broadband connections there is reference at POLICY HG17: SUPPORTING LOCAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES (D) to Openreach:

D. All new residential, commercial and community properties within the Neighbourhood Plan area should be served by (or be ready for) a superfast broadband (fibre-optic) connection, unless it can be demonstrated through consultation with Openreach that this would not be either possible, practical or economically viable.

4.3 It should be noted that Openreach is no longer the only supplier of full fibre broadband in the county and there are several very active alternative providers (altnets) with credible plans for investment.

5. Culture and Tourism

5.1 Tourism: We welcome the prioritisation of public realm improvements and plans to promote sustainable rural tourism. We are in the early stages of a pan-Sussex tourism initiative working with West Sussex County Council, Brighton and Hove City Council, existing Destination Management Organisations, and a business leaders advisory group. We are in the process of developing a Sussex story narrative to underpin overseas marketing and Hurst Green's positioning aligns well with that overarching pan-Sussex vision.

East Sussex Cultural Strategy

5.2 We welcome the proposal for a village hub for Hurst Green - proposed improvements including an outdoor stage support the East Sussex Cultural Strategy: Priority One (create an environment where great cultural experiences are available to everyone to enhance their quality of life). Audience surveys suggest that post-pandemic, people are still most confident to attend outdoor events and the cost-of-living crisis also indicates that free outdoor events will be popular in the foreseeable future. An outdoor performance space is timely and an affordable proposal with low-cost maintenance.