

Date: 25 November 2022
Our ref: 403215
Your ref: n/a



Hurst Green Parish Council
The Parish Office
Village Hall
Hurst Green
East Sussex
TN19 7PL

Customer Services
Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

Emailed to: clerk@hurstgreen-pc.gov.uk

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Parish Clerk

Hurst Green Neighbourhood Plan Pre-Submission Consultation (Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)) Hurst Green, Kent

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 14 July 2022 which was received by Natural England on the same date.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

We have reviewed the Pre-Submission Consultation Draft of the Hurst Green Neighbourhood Plan. The draft neighbourhood plan includes a number of site allocations which are expected to provide 55 new dwellings in total. Hurst Green has been provided by Rother District Council with a target of 75 new homes to accommodate through its neighbourhood plan policies. Planning permission has been granted for 20 homes within the designated neighbourhood planning area outside of the neighbourhood planning process and as a result the housing figure for Hurst Green Neighbourhood Plan has been reduced to 55 dwellings.

Alongside reviewing the emerging Hurst Green Neighbourhood Plan, Natural England has reviewed the existing and emerging Rother District Council development plan documents and note that there are no further housing allocations located within the designated neighbourhood plan area in the adopted development plan. The emerging Local Plan is at an early stage and does not currently include any site allocations.

None of the proposed housing allocation sites lie within the Impact Risk Zone of any SSSI or Habitats Sites. As a result Natural England has no objection to the emerging Hurst Green Neighbourhood Plan in terms of impact on designated nature conservation sites.

Hurst Green is located in its entirety within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The NPPF is clear in paragraph 176 that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs and that the scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Paragraph 177 further sets out that permission for major development within an AONB should be refused for major development other than in

exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.

Natural England's view is that any development within the AONB must be sensitively designed and modestly scaled. Sensitive design can include reflecting the local vernacular in terms of built design and materials, respecting existing settlement morphology, and how that settlement relates to the wider landscape both visually and in terms of physical connectivity, and being supported by appropriate green infrastructure. Further, any development must be consistent with the objectives of the AONB Management Plan.

We note that **Policy HG1: Location of Development** acknowledges the neighbourhood plan's location within the High Weald AONB and stresses the importance of conserving this nationally important landscape.

Policy HG4: Character of Development sets out that development should be guided by the principles included in the High Weald Management Plan, the High Weald Housing Design Guide, the Rother District Council Key Design Principles and the Hurst Green Design Codes. It should be clarified that this is the High Weald AONB Management Plan. We recommend that the site allocation policies included within the emerging neighbourhood plan make greater reference to their location within the High Weald AONB and the fact that any development on these sites must be appropriate for its location and be guided by the principles included in the High Weald AONB Management Plan.

Natural England further advises that the High Weald AONB Unit is consulted at an early stage on any proposed development that comes forward on the housing site allocations within the emerging Hurst Green Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that landscape and visual impact are considered from the outset.

Should the proposal change, please consult us again.

Yours faithfully

Eleanor van der Klugt
Sussex and Kent Sustainable Development Team