

# HURST GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

Hurst Green Village Hall  
Station Road, Hurst Green  
East Sussex  
TN19 7PL

14th February 2025

## **Response to Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 16 representations**

Dear Mr Slater,

Further to our letter containing the Council's responses to your questions within your initial comments document, the Parish Council are grateful for the opportunity to comment on the representations that were submitted during the Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 16 consultation.

At the time of receipt of the request, the Council had not been provided with a copy of these representations. A summary of these were subsequently placed into the public domain by the District Council and provided to the Parish Council on the 24th of January 2025.

The Council is grateful to the organisations and individuals who responded, and in accordance with the Examiner's request to not respond to every comment, the Parish Council has chosen to comment on the following representations:

- HGNP/R16/2024/2
- HGNP/R16/2024/4
- HGNP/R16/2024/5
- HGNP/R16/2024/9
- HGNP/R16/2024/12
- HGNP/R16/2024/14
- HGNP/R16/2024/15
- HGNP/R16/2024/16
- HGNP/R16/2024/17

The Council are happy to expand further on our responses.

**Janet Ellis**

*Clerk to the Council*

*clerk@hurstgreen-pc.gov.uk*

*14.02.2025*

CC:

*Parish Councillors*

*Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group members*

*Rother District Council (including Hurst Green Ward District Councillors)*

*Parish Council website*

**HGNP/R16/2024/2**

***Representation from East Sussex County Council***

The Parish Council acknowledges the feedback from East Sussex Highways. In relation to points 1 and 2, the confirmation that our Neighbourhood Plan aligns with the East Sussex Local Transport Plan (2024–2050) and addresses key transport challenges is noted and appreciated.

On point 3, Policy HG7: We agree with the recommendation that wayfinding and signage must be sensitively located to prevent street clutter. We would support the inclusion of addition to Clause A(iii) to include: "...and contribute to improved wayfinding and signage, where a clear need is identified and provided that they can be satisfactorily sensitively integrated within their surroundings;". The suggestion to carefully balance car parking provision with improving walking, wheeling, and cycling connectivity to new green spaces aligns with Policy HG18. We would suggest cross-referencing Policy HG18 and Policy HG19 in the supporting text of Policy HG7 to clarify this link.

Points 4 and 5 are noted.

On point 6, the Parish Council would be content to include cross-references to the LTP and its modal strategies, most helpfully within Section 10 (Transport).

On point 4 and 5, the Parish Council welcomes the suggestion to include "wheeling" alongside "walking and cycling" to improve accessibility for those using wheelchairs or mobility scooters. We propose updating all relevant references throughout the Plan to reflect this inclusive terminology. While bus travel is mentioned in the evidence base, we would agree to emphasise its role more prominently in the supporting text of Policy HG18. This would include mentioning the Flexibus service, assuming it is intended that this service will be continuing beyond its initial period.

On point 6, safe crossing points on the A21 are already proposed in Policy HG18, specifically near the school and the northern end of the village. To provide additional clarity, we could enhance the supporting text to explain delivery expectations and the need for collaboration with National Highways, East Sussex Highways, and other stakeholders.

The Parish Council notes point 7, however as the provision of education sits outside the scope of the NDP, we do not include a policy on this.

In relation to point 8, the Parish Council agrees that greater emphasis on cultural provisions, such as dance, drama, and art, could enhance Policy HG14. We would be amenable to adding language to reflect these aspirations in the supporting text.

The Parish Council have not been provided with the wording referenced at point 9.

On point 10, as the HG18 section and the associated Policy accord with NPPF (2023) para 104 (related to protecting / improving PROW), references to the LCWIP / Rights of Way Plan could be added to the supporting text, as noted above.

**HGNP/R16/2024/4**

***Representation from Kent County Council***

The Parish Council acknowledges Kent County Council's feedback, and the Council's request to be included in pre-application consultations regarding the sites on the A21. While it is expected that developers work closely with neighbouring Highway Authorities where impacts are foreseeable, the Parish Council would welcome clearer mechanisms to facilitate dialogue between Kent County Council, East Sussex County Council, Rother District Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, and National Highways to ensure impacts on cross-boundary infrastructure are addressed comprehensively.

In relation to point 1 on Policy HG2. The Parish Council agrees that the need for a transport assessment to support planning applications could be added into the supporting text. The Parish Council supports the inclusion of robust assessments scoped appropriately for cross-boundary highways impacts. Developers should demonstrate any mitigation measures necessary to manage additional traffic pressures along the A21 and local Kent roads to maintain safety and capacity. We note this is typically coordinated between Local Planning Authorities and neighbouring Highway Authorities at application stages.

In relation to point 1 on Policy HG18, the Parish Council is pleased with Kent County Council's support for the Neighbourhood Plan's aspirations on active travel and leisure facility development. Policy HG18 strongly emphasises improving the local Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network to encourage cycling and walking within Hurst Green and beyond. We note that Kent County Council's representation mentions residents walking or cycling between parishes and highlights two PRoW that connect across the parish and county boundary. However, there is currently no pavement or direct route linking Hurst Green and Hawkhurst. Walking to Hawkhurst for example, requires navigating a not insignificant distance over muddy fields, making it unsuitable for regular use by most residents. Similarly, the walk to Flimwell is a steep and lengthy journey of over an hour along the busy A21. We are therefore unclear what Kent County Council is referencing regarding cross-parish walking routes, as they do not presently provide a realistic option for safe or practical travel. The existing routes are shown on a map and could be emphasised in the supporting text, however the Council do not believe there is a need to mention them explicitly in the policy - indeed Clause B already alludes to them and the desire for greater connectivity to neighbouring settlements.

On point 2, the Parish Council agrees that the benefits to physical and mental health and wellbeing could be further alluded to in the supporting text, however we feel that it is not necessarily for the policy itself.

**HGPN/R16/2024/5**

***Representation from National Highways***

The Parish Council appreciates National Highways's representation, and the Parish Council is pleased that National Highways acknowledges our commitment to traffic assessments and early engagement.

In relation to the matters raised, points 1, 2, and 6 are noted.

In relation to point 3, the Parish Council agrees that this could be mentioned in the supporting text, but does note that a Transport Statement/Assessment and a Travel Plan is part of the RDC Planning Validation Checklist.

On point 4, we note that this detail could be added to the supporting text of this policy.

In relation to point 5, we do agree that the description provided at paragraph 11.16, that currently states "...from the A21 located at the site's south eastern boundary is incorrect, and agree that this should be amended to read "...from the A21 located along the site's western boundary".

**HGNP/R16/2024/9**

***Representation from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council***

The Parish Council appreciates TWBC's interest in our Neighbourhood Plan and the representation.

Points 1 and 2 are noted.

In relation to point 3, the Parish Council disagrees with TWBC's assertion that Policy HG2 lacks clarity. We consider the policy and its supporting text to be sufficiently detailed, providing the necessary justification for the Parish's housing strategy. However, we recognise there may be strong merit in reintroducing the policies for the HG6 and HG22 sites to ensure the policy framework for these sites remains clear in the event of alternative schemes being proposed, allowing for the delivery of community benefits via the associated criteria.

On point 4, Policy HG4: Character of Development, TWBC raises concerns about the suitability of images used to illustrate good design principles, specifically referencing Vicarage Way and Coronation Gardens. However, these images are not intended to demonstrate "good design" but to represent typical building styles within the defined character areas, as outlined in the accompanying character area descriptions. The Parish Council directs developers to our design codes for good design principles, rather than relying solely on the character descriptions in Policy HG4.

In relation to point 6, Policy HG13: A Green Village Hub for Hurst Green, TWBC questions the lack of mechanisms within the Plan for collecting developer contributions toward a Green Village Hub. We would clarify that there is no "build project" under this policy and, therefore, no requirement for a mechanism to collect such contributions. However, the Parish Council agrees that adding a map to indicate the specific area for the proposed Village Hub would enhance clarity.

In relation to Policy HG18: Encouraging Sustainable Movement, TWBC's stance on shared surfaces conflicts with the Parish Council's position. As outlined in our response to the examiner, the Parish Council has carefully considered Active Travel England's guidance but maintains its opposition to shared surfaces in this rural context. This reflects both community feedback and specific local challenges, such as the dominance of the A21, pedestrian safety concerns, limited street lighting, and the practicalities of accommodating active travel within the parish.

## **HGNP/R16/2024/12**

### ***Representation from Rother District Council***

The Parish Council acknowledges the feedback provided by Rother District Council, and is grateful for the support it has provided throughout the Neighbourhood Plan process.

The District Council's points in relation to Policies: HG11, HG12, and HG13 are noted.

Policy HG1: The Parish Council are minded of the Planning Portal guidance on infill development, and feel that further definition of the phrase "small-scale infill and redevelopment" would be unhelpful and could be unnecessarily restricting when assessing the merits of an application. To provide flexibility, the proposed phrase provides planners with the ability to consider the infill plot, in the wider context of the proposed development, and the existing land-uses.

The Parish Council would prefer the original wording of Policy HG1 B(iv) be retained, recognising that the entire parish and all of Rother is within the High Weald National Landscape, and that the District Council's suggestion would set an impossibly high bar for development.

Policy HG1 C: Removal of "When Viewed from Publicly Accessible Locations"

The Parish Council proposes retaining the phrase "when viewed from publicly accessible locations." This wording emphasises publicly accessible views, such as those from paths, roads, and public rights of way, which are most relevant to the community and planning decisions. While we acknowledge that other visual impacts are important, broader policies already address these considerations. Retaining this phrase maintains the clarity and purpose of the policy.

Policy HG1 D: Addition of "Subject to Other Development Plan Policies"

The Parish Council does not support the addition of the phrase "subject to other Development Plan policies." as this addition would be redundant, as the overarching planning framework already ensures compliance with wider Local Plan policies. The Council believes the current wording provides sufficient clarity without unnecessary repetition.

Policy HG2 and Policy HGSA4: The Parish Council is surprised by the District Council's suggestion to delete site HG45 (Land Adjacent to Iridge Place, TN19 7PN) from the plan. Following the Council's initial site assessment conducted on behalf of the Council by AECOM, the Parish Council commissioned a detailed landscape assessment (funded by a significant government grant) that was conducted by Nick Harper, who was chosen as part of a competitive tender process due to his familiarity with the High Weald and the local area. The landscape assessment confirmed that the HG45 site was developable, provided the development followed a landscape-led approach.

The policy, and also the site promoter have adhered to these recommendations in their proposed scheme, ensuring that any development respects the local landscape

and integrates well with the surrounding environment. This consideration is pivotal to ensuring that the development does not cause harm to the rural character of the area.

The Parish Council was concerned to learn that neither of the District Council's local Councillors, nor other decision-makers, had visited the site personally to assess its suitability. The recommendation to remove the site from the allocation appears to be based largely on satellite imagery and a drive-past on the A21, which does not offer a sufficient or accurate understanding of the site's characteristics and its potential for sensitive development. The Parish Council is confident that site HG45 is not only developable but can be done so in a way that is sensitive to the existing landscape and fits within the wider planning policies for the area. The professional work undertaken to date suggests that a landscape-led development will mitigate any potential issues, such as visual impact or disruption to local biodiversity. The proposed scheme is fully aligned with the findings of the landscape assessment, offering a thoughtful, sustainable approach to development.

Policy HG3: In relation to HG3, the Parish Council notes the requirement for the first 25% of affordable housing to be delivered as First Homes, is no longer required. Therefore, the Parish Council would be supportive of amendments similar to "proposals that enable greater affordability uplifts and prioritise local residents when it comes to allocating housing (such as the use of First Homes). Proposals that enable an uplift of up to 50% to the discounts provided on any First Homes element of the development, to assist single occupants on median and lower quartile income, will be particularly supported. Where such an uplift is demonstrated to be unviable, proposals should provide at least a 30% discount. Such proposals should seek to prioritise those with local connections to Hurst Green parish (see Glossary) and key workers."

Policy HG4 A: The Parish Council is unclear why the District Council wishes to delete the words "*and has reflected the character and vernacular of the area, using architectural variety in form and materials*" from Policy HG4 A, as no explanation has been supplied. Therefore, the Parish Council opposes the deletion of this sentence.

Policy HG4 E: The Parish Council is unclear why the District Council has raised an objection to clause E. The clause would apply to any development, including any that may be beyond the development boundary. The Parish Council asserts that should a site come forward in the future that was beyond the development boundary, there would be no reason that it could not be designed in such a way that it would meet the requirements of this clause.

Policy HG5: The Parish Council agree that a reference to Homes England 'Streets for a Healthy Life' may be helpful. The Council's inclusion of the policy requirement for at least one pavement per road is specifically aimed at ensuring the safety and accessibility of the village's streets. This policy reflects the local context, as it addresses issues specific to Hurst Green. Please see our detailed response to the Examiner on this topic.

Policy HG6: The Parish Council has no objection to the strengthening of this policy in the way the District Council has suggested.

Policy HG7: The Parish Council is unclear what the District Council has proposed in relation to HG7, the text made in the representation is a copy of the text from the policy without a specific comment.

Policy HG9: The Parish Council suggests that it would be preferable to keep the phrase ancient trees, as these can exist separately to ancient woodland. The Council are minded to suggest that the clause could be amended to 'retains, protects and enhances ancient trees / ancient woodland'.

Policy HG10: Green Infrastructure

The Parish Council agrees that the reference to a 'biodiversity appraisal' should be amended to a Biodiversity Gain Plan.

HG14: Sport and Leisure Facilities in Hurst Green

The Parish Council's intention was not to support any development proposal that happened to deliver these facilities, rather that these were the facilities that the community would expect to be prioritised. The Council would be supportive of an amendment to the policy wording that makes this clear.

HG16: Promoting rural tourism

The Parish Council wishes to support tourism growth in an inclusive manner, and has noted in the supporting text of our plan (at paragraph 9.8), that "The rural location of Hurst Green, and the geographic spread of attractions, makes it difficult to visit without access to a car." Therefore the Council has made a distinction between sustainable rural tourism and green rural tourism, which is significant, particularly in the context of Hurst Green's unique rural characteristics. Sustainable rural tourism encompasses a comprehensive approach that balances environmental, economic, and social objectives. It aims to foster economic growth, preserve cultural heritage, and minimise environmental impacts, thereby ensuring the long-term viability of Hurst Green. This approach acknowledges the current limitations in public transport and cycling infrastructure and supports the use of evolving technologies, such as electric vehicles, to promote tourism. By doing so, it aligns with sustainable development goals without imposing unrealistic expectations on visitors' modes of travel. In contrast, Green rural tourism only supports tourism practices that minimise carbon footprint, such as traveling by bicycle or public transport. While environmentally beneficial, this focus will inadvertently restrict tourist accessibility in Hurst Green and northern Rother, where alternative transportation options are limited and underdeveloped. The Parish Council has therefore aptly titled Policy HG16 as "Promoting Sustainable Rural Tourism." This designation reflects a balanced strategy that encourages tourism development while considering environmental sustainability and the practical realities of visitor access, without deterring visitors who rely on personal vehicles due to the weak current transportation infrastructure.

Policy HG17 C: The Parish Council's intention was to enable the development of space that could be used flexibly, i.e. for a range of different uses, but within a given use class, excluding a change to residential.



Policy HG21: The Council agrees with the District Council's recommendation to remove the NPPF paragraph number from Policy HG21 "Highway capacity at key road junctions".

Design Codes: The Parish Council welcomes the District Council's most recent feedback on our Design Codes, and acknowledges the Council's detailed feedback that has already been incorporated following our Regulation 14 consultation.

As with all planning guidance, the Council believes that the Hurst Green Design Codes exist alongside, as well as independently of the Neighbourhood Plan, with a lifespan well beyond 2028, and that the Codes will evolve over time, to reflect good practices, include further examples, or as a result of changing regulations, or updated local needs, as well as in response to specific new feedback, such as the District Council's updated comments.

The Parish Council remains committed to keeping the Design Codes up to date and relevant, as well as seeking opportunities to improve their usability. The Council's intent is that the Design Codes will be kept up-to-date, and published on the Council's website, alongside additional photographic examples, which will further support applicants in understanding and applying the guidance effectively.

The Council welcomes constructive engagement in this process and believes that planning applicants will find the Design Codes valuable in shaping high-quality development within the parish.

**HGNP/R16/2024/14**

***Representation from Jenny Jones***

The Parish Council appreciates the representation.

In response to point 1, this is a matter for the examination. Point 2 is noted. Points 3 and 4 are outside the scope of the neighbourhood plan.

In relation to point 5 (community hub), the Parish Council is aware of misinformation being circulated via private social media groups regarding the Green Village Hub and would like to clarify the purpose and intent behind this initiative as part of a wider response to this representation. As outlined in the Neighbourhood Plan, the Green Village Hub is proposed in direct response to the community's expressed desires to enhance local facilities and the overall appearance of Hurst Green.

The Council's vision for the Hub has never been to build a new building, instead it recognises existing facilities under a single unified banner of the "green village hub"—the village hall, public car park, and children's park—and potentially utilising other land or buildings under the control of the Parish Council or relevant branches of government. This aims to create a cohesive, accessible focal point for the community within this area. The associated policy is designed not only to encourage development improvements, but also to regulate them. For example, it explicitly states that any proposed enhancements must "not have unacceptable adverse impacts on the amenities of surrounding residents and the local environment." This ensures that any future changes will be both appropriate and beneficial to the community.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Parish Council has no plans—nor has it ever had plans—to build a new community centre, replace the village hall, build a theatre, or install tiered theatre seating, or floodlight the village park. These claims are baseless and misrepresent the Parish Council's objectives.

The Parish Council is committed to fostering a village environment that reflects the values and needs of its residents and encourages open, constructive dialogue on these important community matters. The inclusion of this policy outlines our desire to make the Village Hub area a key focal point for the village.

**HGNP/R16/2024/15**  
**Representation from Ned Pakenham**

The Parish Council appreciates the representation.

In relation to the green village hub, please see the Council's response to HGNP/R16/2024/14.

The current approved Hurst Green Design Codes were developed by a professional planning organisation appointed by HM Government as part of a grant obtained by the Parish Council, and refined following input from the Parish Council, Rother District Council, and as a result of feedback gathered at the neighbourhood plan public exhibition, and during the regulation 14 consultation. The Codes provide an important framework to guide development within Hurst Green, ensuring that new proposals align with the character and distinctiveness of the parish.

The Parish Council acknowledges the comment regarding the Hurst Green Design Codes, but given the positive feedback received from site promoters, does not share the view that there are many issues with them, rather that the increased interest in the Codes has generated further interest and ideas for consideration and incorporation in future revisions. As a newer member of the Council, Councillor Pakenham has already provided a number of helpful contributions to the ongoing refinement and application of the Design Codes, and minor amendments reflecting these are in the process of being published, subject to wider Council approval.

As with all planning guidance, the Council believes that the Hurst Green Design Codes exist alongside, as well as independently of the Neighbourhood Plan, with a lifespan beyond 2028, and that will evolve over time to reflect best practices, further good-practice examples, changing regulations, and local needs. The Parish Council remains committed to keeping the Design Codes up to date and relevant. The Council's intent is that updates will be published on the Council's website alongside additional photographic examples, which will further support applicants in understanding and applying the guidance effectively.

The Council welcomes constructive engagement in this process and believes that planning applicants will find the Design Codes valuable in shaping high-quality development within the parish.

**HGNP/R16/2024/16**

***Representation from Anthony Tiernan***

The Parish Council appreciates the representation and Mr Tiernan's position, particularly given that he will most likely be affected during the construction period and the outlook of the proposed site, were it to be granted planning permission.

The Parish Council is mindful of the balance to be struck between delivering the quantum of housing (as required by government, via Rother District Council) and identifying sites that would have the least environmental impact.

The proposed site is located adjacent to the current Hurst Green development boundary, and is well located to village services.

Policy HGSA4 has been directly informed by an independent landscape assessment and a Strategic Environmental Assessment. The Council notes that most development is now required to deliver a net gain in biodiversity of at least 10% as required by the Environment Act.

We confirm that following the regulation 14 consultation, Policy HGSA4 has been amended to require a Stage 2 landscape assessment and a Visual Impact Assessment, Tree Survey and a Heritage statement.

**HGNP/R16/2024/17**

***Representation from Corinne Stuart***

The Parish Council appreciates the representation and the prior engagement that Mrs Stuart has had with the Neighbourhood Plan and the Parish Council during the development of the Neighbourhood Plan, as well as Mrs Stuart's attendance at some of our meetings. We have previously responded to Mrs Stuart on many of the matters raised within her representation, the Parish Council is happy to clarify our position.

In relation to point 1, the Local Green Space (LGS) designation is a mechanism used to identify spaces that are demonstrably special to the community and meet strict criteria as outlined in national policy. It is not intended as a blanket designation for most areas or as a tool to prevent development. The Parish Council has previously explained that while Cook's Field was submitted by a resident as a suggestion for potential LGS designation, it was not taken forward following an independent assessment by a qualified neighbourhood planning consultant. It was determined that the site did not meet the necessary criteria for designation. As a result, it was not included in the proposed list of Local Green Spaces consulted upon at the public exhibition in 2022, or within the Regulation 14 version of the Neighbourhood Plan.

In relation to point 2, Burgh Wood is already designated as Ancient Woodland and is already protected under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This designation ensures robust protection, and the wood is not under any direct threat from development.

On point 3, this policy represents aspirations that have stemmed from extensive community engagement and the Council feels right to embed into our Neighbourhood Plan policies. As we have outlined at Parish Council meetings, the Council's vision for the hub area has never been to build a new building, instead the policy recognises existing facilities under a single unified banner of the "green village hub"—the village hall, public car park, and children's park—and potentially utilising other land or buildings under the control of the Parish Council or relevant branches of government. This aims to create a cohesive, accessible focal point for the community within this area.

The associated policy is designed not only to encourage development improvements, but also to regulate them. For example, it explicitly states that any proposed enhancements must "not have unacceptable adverse impacts on the amenities of surrounding residents and the local environment." This ensures that any future changes will be both appropriate and beneficial to the community. For the avoidance of doubt, the Parish Council has no plans—nor has it ever had plans—to build a new community centre, replace the village hall, build a theatre, or install tiered theatre seating, or floodlight the village park. These circulated claims are baseless and misrepresent the Parish Council's objectives.

In relation to point 4, the Council believes that Hurst Green and the surrounding area is attractive to visitors, notably due to its location near to a range of regionally important visitor attractions. The associated policy seeks to promote tourism, where it

can be undertaken sustainably, to capitalise on this. This could ultimately bring additional income to the parish, which the Council is supportive of.

On point 5, Councillors have previously explained at various Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meetings, strategic transport matters are outside the scope of what can be influenced by a neighbourhood plan. The Council does include aspirations to have walking/wheeling/cycling within the plan - which in turn would necessitate discussions with ESCC, as the Highways Authority, and exploration of ways to calm traffic through the village.

In relation to point 6, Councillors have previously explained that the Parish Council is only able to work with the housing numbers provided by the District Council, which have formed the basis of the housing strategy. That is not to say that the District Council, in a future Local Plan may not allocate additional strategic sites in Hurst Green, or a review of the Hurst Green Neighbourhood Plan may lead to consideration of additional sites.

On point 7, the Parish Council disagrees with this characterisation, our consultation statement sets out the extensive community engagement that has taken place as part of the plan since 2018, which included placing articles (including about the proposed site on Burgh Hill), in the village newsletter, distributed to all residents, as well as writing via Royal Mail, to every household to canvas views during our Regulation 14 consultation.

In relation to point 8, as the Council has previously explained, the production of our Neighbourhood Plan has been largely funded by Government Grants. We have previously provided detailed breakdowns as part of FOI requests, and note that our parish accounts are published online and are independently audited by Mulberry Local Authority Services limited.