

Building Development Working Group Report for the Herstmonceux Neighbourhood Plan

Background

The Building Development Working Group was set up by Herstmonceux Parish Council, working under their Planning Committee for the purposes of monitoring any development of any size within the parish and developing working relationships with all parties involved. Principally they will liaise with the local authorities i.e. Wealden District Council and East Sussex County Council along with developers, housing associations, infrastructure providers and other agencies as necessary. The BDV aim to be involved at the various stages of design of housing in ensuring that developments within the parish will be in keeping with the area and is able to input for this to take place.

The Building Development Working Group (as referred to from this point as BDV) was appointed in 2015 comprising of the following Parish Councillors:-

Jenny Alder (Chair), Jo Angear, Angela Ashley, Malcolm Bradshaw, Mick Goodsell, Heather Kenward, Stephen Nash, Ian Stewart and Catherine Stirling-Reed.

It was felt that the group would benefit from local knowledge, expertise and input. Residents were invited to apply to become co-opted members.

These are:-

Mrs A Von Barnholt Krag, Mrs B Burke, Mr R Shepherd and Miss C Stockman.

Sources of Information

As part of the information gathering process for the Herstmonceux Parish Neighbourhood Plan (referred to as HPNP) this includes meetings of the working group held bi-monthly, individual members expertise in the group, interaction with community such as via Herstmonceux Community Facebook page and Herstmonceux Action Group Facebook page. However some of the working group councillors are also members of the HPNP Steering Committee and input from those councillors also formed part of the information gathering for this report.

Focus of the Report

In line with the Design of Development Policy in the HPNP which :-

"...requires all development proposals to demonstrate their design has positively responded to the adopted Wealden Design Guide".

(Conformity Reference: Wealden Local Plan EN27 and NPPF para's 56 and 58)

1. *This policy requires all development proposals to reflect the design guidance for the Low Weald contained in the adopted Wealden Design Guide of 2008. This defines the design elements that contribute significantly to the local distinctiveness, in the case of this parish, the Low Weald character area. As such, the policy conforms to saved development plan policy EN27 on the layout and design of new development by helping define the essential local characteristics.*

2. *Although not covered by a national landscape designation, the Low Weald is an area of generally attractive countryside. The underlying geology is essentially the softer Wealden clays, with small sandstone ridges and outcrops on the fringes of the High Weald. The landscape is generally more open than the High Weald, becoming flatter towards the Downs.*

3. *As with the other character zones, buildings initially drew on local sources for their materials. This palette broadened, however, with the coming of the railways in the mid-nineteenth century, which gave access to a wider range. Materials used here include:*

- *Timber framing, originally with wattle-and-daub infill panels*
- *Stone of varying quality and colour, normally square-cut (but not always)*
- *Local orange/red brick, normally laid in English or Flemish bond*
- *Blue/grey burnt brick headers, often used to form patterns*
- *Coursed flint (both knapped and unknapped)*
- *Lime render (limewashed), sometimes marked out to imitate stone*
- *Handmade orange/red clay plain tiles for roofs and vertical hanging*
- *Mathematical tiles (particularly in Uckfield) over timber framing*
- *Feather-edged weatherboarding, often black (pitch) for agricultural use*

NB - Please note that there are no houses in Herstmonceux that have used stone and mathematical tiling.

This report is being produced to highlight the main points around development in the parish which need to be included in the HPNP where relevant and will be covered as follows:-

1. Building Design
2. Site Layout
3. Infrastructure Provision

Other areas such as Green Spaces, AONB, Protection of Ancient Woodland etc are being addressed by other reports feeding into the information gathering process for the HPNP.

1. Building Design

In line with WDC's Design Guide but taking into account the area in which the parish sits, the design of buildings is of major importance for any development large or small within Herstmonceux Parish. However single or developments of 1 to 3 houses whilst conforming may also have individualist design where appropriate. The BDV is acutely aware that development is inevitable and has to take place but it is hopeful that careful consideration is given at the full planning stage and reserved matters when considering the 'look' of the development in question.

Points to be considered in preferred style of building to include:-

- A mixture of materials which would match those of the original village - plain tiles, slates, stock brickwork, some black and white featheredge boarding and possibly a small amount of flint work and rendering (in suitable locations away from trees)
- House design to be traditional for the area whilst incorporating modern materials. To include steeply pitched roofs of differing styles, Sussex style windows and good quality detailing
- A variety of designs within the site



Typical 'Sussex' design showing mix design and materials used.



Example of 2 storey flats incorporating mix of materials including flint



Development in the area of chalet bungalows suited for residents wishing to remain in the parish and wishing to downsize.

There has been a development within Herstmonceux which is in keeping with its surroundings in the centre of the village. The development is a mix of terraced houses, flats and chalet bungalow dwellings.

In conversation with one of the residents of the terraced chalet bungalows at the rear of the development it was said " ... *I am extremely happy here, love it and very glad to be able to live in such a nice development*".

The Old Trug Shop, Gardner Street, Herstmonceux



One bedroom chalet bungalows with small private area at rear backing on to communal garden area.



Terraced cottage style properties showing attractive front aspect to main road .



Second half of development on the road, showing flats and access road to bungalow development at the rear.

In contrast, the following pictures are an example of the type of development built in the parish which did not adhere to original detail of the plan or the above preferred styles of build. Eventually it bore little resemblance to the original plans and is a development that which should not be repeated as pictures below.

North Lodge, Hailsham Road, Hertsmonceux



Site is on the approach to village showing buildings not in keeping with styles opposite. Excessive and inappropriate use of rendering which is now unsightly due to algae growth which could be prevented by a finish that includes preventatives. The property frontage not suited for its environs and approach to historical village



Further detail of site, shows inappropriate style of build, exterior finish and services equipment taking out parking space. As a consequence parking occurs in the bus stop and on the pavement as shown below.



Parking issues at North Lodge



Inappropriate use of materials and design of dormer windows impacting on the outlook of North Lodge. Frontage of houses not finished off with suitable demarcation boundaries to pavement area.



Detail of degraded rendering and services equipment impacting on frontage outlook. Also lack of suitable provision for bins.

Comment and concerns regarding the design aspects of the buildings on this development are as follows:-

- The overall appearance is completely out of keeping with the surrounding houses and village materials which are mainly brick and tile, or slate. This is such a prominent location at the approach to the village centre that we would have expected a much better selection of materials.
- The use of rendering in this location near trees is unsatisfactory, generally it is now covered in algae and already looking shabby. The vertical blue stripes on some of the properties is totally out of keeping.
- The 'box' dormers are out of keeping and look 'cheap and nasty' and not a suitable window style.

The following pictures are examples of the preferred models of design of the BDV for consideration for housing developments within the parish.



'Sussex' style terraced housing with sensitive mix of materials used and style of exterior finish such as tile hung and weatherboarding.



Terraced row of cottage style properties using a local material i.e. flint and typical design feature of tile hung exterior.



An example of sheltered housing in local area showing the cottage style again and window and roof detailing.



An example of a housing association development in the local area.



The same development showing the houses fronting the road.

2. Site Layout

It is clear that this point is equally important in designing the layout of any development sites within the parish. The BDV are particularly keen that the following site layout aspects are not part of any sites:-

- Straight wide estate roads
- Repetitive designs, straight rows of houses etc
- Cheap or unsuitable building materials which do not match those in the village
- Alien design details such as box dormers etc.
- Three storey buildings or 3 or more levels of blocks of flats etc.
- Exposed sub-stations or other obtrusive services detailing.

Comments and concerns regarding site layout with respect to North Lodge show poor layout of this site as follows:-

- a. The siting so close to the main A 271 road is unsatisfactory.
- b. The frontage appearance of part walled, part open, is very poor and with no enclosure of the frontages of some has lead to unsightly display of bins and other domestic stuff. This surely is dangerous where children and pets can run straight out onto the busy road.
- c. There is inadequate bin storage, bins are left out all week.
- d. There is inadequate car parking provision, cars and vans are parked on the main road and verges. This creates traffic hazards on this already overcrowded road.
- e. No attempt has been made to straighten the unsightly leaning telegraph pole or to resite the mobile phone mast and its associated metal box, both of which add to the messy frontage appearance.

Final comments not necessarily specific to design and layout but require addressing in the HPNPc are:-

- a. It is believed that the Parish Council were not kept informed of design changes and were unable to prevent the disgraceful standard of development.
- b. Young people in the village eligible for affordable housing were not given priority.

Aspects of site layout that are the preferred style of the BDV and planning considerations must include:-

- Layouts based on Home Zone principles as per Wealden Design Guide, giving pedestrians priority rather than vehicles; curved lines in the road layouts
- Tree planting, where possible, and some strategic green spaces.
- Traditional walls, fencing and street furniture
- Layouts to Secure by Design standards

- Proper provision for off road car parking and for keeping bins out of sight
- Development of suitable scale and design to suit the above for the elderly and of similar quality for the Affordable houses

Following are examples of site layout with particular reference to Home Zone principles referred to above.



The following pictures are further examples of 'Sussex' style of housing, incorporating a mix of styles and materials.



3. Developments and Infrastructure Provision

Bearing in mind the timescale of the HPNP up to 2037 and beyond, there will be a need to address all aspects of infrastructure with regard to design and especially those directly concerning any future developments within the Parish.

Comments and concerns raised by the information gathering for this report include:-

- I. Inadequate school provision
- II. Inadequate car parking provision
- III. Lack of sufficient sports and leisure facilities.
- IV. Potential for businesses
- V. Traffic Management
- VI. Drainage

I. School

Feedback confirmed that the school in the village is full and not able to cope with current demand. Parents of the parish are being forced to send their children to schools in nearby neighbourhoods.

For example, follows a response to Herstmonceux Community Facebook page for comments:-

"one thing in terms of infrastructure is the school. No point in building new homes etc. when the school is full and despite an appeal my partner's son has to start year one in Hellingly! A porta-cabin at least to alleviate this issue until more permanent development can begin at the school. I live in West End and this seems like poor planning presently (not your exact dept I know) let alone before new chimney pots go up" .

Therefore any future developments will inevitably bring in a large influx of children which the school will be unlikely to cope with. There will perhaps be a need long term to relocate the school. It could be incorporated in any 'large' scale development and the current site made available for parking and possibly some small scale development such as assisted housing for the elderly.

II. Car Parking

Until such time as the school is relocated there are major issues around the parking outside the school during term times peak hours. There are also difficulties with parking for residents and parishioners in Herstmonceux village centre car park being full of school staff cars. An alternative site for staff car parking needs to be revisited and pursued to

alleviate this problem in the short term if Herstmoncuex is to be developed as a 'service' centre for the parish.

There are other issues around parking within the parish where green spaces such as grass verges are being destroyed, parking in Gardner Street causing serious issues for parishioners trying to use the pavements. Future developments must be mindful of the need for parking and it not becoming an unsocial activity.

III. Sports & Leisure Facilities.

As part of the currently proposed development at Lime Cross, the Parish Council need to commit to the provision of facilities for Sports and Leisure in the parish and the proposed development of the Sports Pavilion must proceed as soon as possible. The BDV have requested that action is taken to secure the land for this to be done with the utmost urgency. Investment in this project has already been made by the Parish Council and the residents now require this to be given priority as far as future development within the parish.

In doing so the resiting of the Bowls Club could free up land for further development of the school as noted in I. above. Other clubs could also use the pavilion on a shared basis besides the current interested parties i.e football club and scouts but other potential groups such as kick boxing, karate, street dancing, etc which address some of the needs of the younger residents. It would be of great benefit to the community as a whole if this particular project gets off the ground before any development of the Lime Cross site.

There are several options to be considered not least the redesign of the Lime Cross development to place the housing around the outside of the area and place the sports and leisure facilities behind and adjoining the existing recreation ground and cricket pitch. The currently owned parish land could be exchanged for a similar sized area and any pavilion built could become a parish community asset especially if it is built by the Parish Council in the same way as the new village hall was built.

There has been great interest in improving leisure activities as noted in engagement with local groups through the HPNP information gathering process. This also applies especially to a long term of view of providing facilities for cycling and walking within the parish. Long term, from a health perspective, it could also be instrumental in providing an alternative to the car in getting to and from immediate neighbouring parishes. The BDV would be supportive on action taken by developers of the parish in achieving this.

IV Businesses in the Parish

As part of the long term development of the Parish the BDV would like to see the provision of suitable buildings, on sites being developed, for small business units. Any sites put forward to Planning need to consider the suitability for small business start up in the parish. It is hoped that within the HPNP there will be a policy with regard to development of 'brownfield' sites or sites suited to this kind of build.

Any current redundant buildings within the parish also need to be considered in providing start up units for village entrepreneurs with a potential for employment in the parish. Previous manufacturing sites have been too readily developed with housing in mind and not as replacing the industry being lost, as particularly commented by a resident

" ... I moved to the village because I had a job with a local manufacturer in the village but lost my job when the site was sold for houses and have had to look for work out of the village, spoiling the reason for moving in the first place."

V. Traffic Management

As far as the BDV is concerned, traffic management is an integral part of development within the parish. New accesses onto the main traffic bearing roads should not increase danger. The access from Lime Park development is very likely to be dangerous and in BDV discussions it was thought that perhaps an access onto Church Road/Chapel Row would be less dangerous and cause less congestion. Any new access to the playing field/proposed pavilions etc should be combined with access to the new development.

West End is another black spot with traffic regularly having to take to the pavements. The BDV would not support any more development north of the A271 increasing this problem along with proximity to AONB and land adjacent already covered in the HPNP. The BDV would be supportive of any measures for the best long term measures for coping with or reducing the traffic problems through the village. Although a by-pass was voted against several years ago, with the prospect of 200 plus new houses in the village, the doubling in size of Hailsham and the general predicted increase in national traffic volume by 2037 this proposal should be re-investigated with the public and ESCC, perhaps as a long term ambition. Other villages such as East Hoathly have benefitted greatly from a by-pass without loss of their shops and pubs as was alleged would occur in Herstmonceux.

Vi. Drainage

BDV members are very keen for the surface water discharge from the known and probable new development sites, which are all south of the

A271 to be well designed to avoid local flooding and pollution and must not damage the ecology of the Pevensey Levels where SW drainage will ultimately discharge to. Foul drainage is already causing severe problems in Victoria Road as well as elsewhere within Herstmonceux and needs to be upgraded. There is doubt if the existing sewage treatment plant can cope with the maximum new development numbers proposed by 2037. The BDV should try to get all the new development south of the A271 coordinated into a new foul sewer running through the development sites, not connected piece-meal to the existing pipework. This would avoid major disruption in the village which we can all do without and will involve proactive liaison and negotiation with WDC, SWA and developers. The BDV consider this would be a worthwhile policy to have HPNP.

Conclusion

The BDV will continue to work in close partnership with local authorities, building developers, housing associations, service providers etc., under the guidance of the Planning Committee of the Parish Council, in particular regard to the 'design and future look' of the parish as far as any housing developments are concerned.

The BDV are keen to ensure that the above comments, feedback from parishioners and their ideas around all aspects design are a fundamental component of the HPNP Policy for all aspects of design and build.

BDV Working Group
1 September 2016