

EAST HOATHLY WITH HALLAND PARISH PLAN

(SECOND EDITION - REVISED 2008)

PREFACE

Work on the Parish Plan for East Hoathly with Halland started in 2002 and was completed when the Plan was published 2004. It has evolved into five main portfolios:

1. Housing and Commercial
2. Transport and Communication, Utilities and Policing
3. Footpaths, Trees and Ponds
4. Recreation
5. Environment and Ecosystem

Portfolios are managed independently by groups of councillors although there is a degree of inter-activity and crossover.

In 2004 the Government promulgated the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act introducing a new system of “spatial planning.” Simplistically this called on Planning Authorities to abandon Local Development Plans and replace them with a new system of Local Development Frameworks.

Wealden District Council (WDC), the planning authority for East Hoathly with Halland decided to go against the timetable imposed by the Government and complete its Local Development Plan to be followed up, some years late, with a Local Development Framework.

WDC produced a “Non-Statutory Local Plan” in December 2005. This single, arbitrary decision by WDC threatens to destroy the fabric of the community of East Hoathly and is the major driver for the need for the Parish Plan to be revised. The parish council opposes the Non-Statutory Plan as it applies to East Hoathly with Halland because: it falls down on quantitative or qualitative evidence of sustainability to support 75 dwellings in East Hoathly village; it denies the parish its right to a Public Inquiry and it is being used as an instrument to suppress challenges that have been made to the Non-Statutory Plan and its forerunners.

The South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) published the “South East Plan for Submission to Government” in March 2006. This Plan lays down the framework for Planning Authorities to follow and sets out the criteria for sustainability assessments.

Comparison of the SEERA Draft Plan and WDC’s Non-Statutory Plan indicates that WDC’s sustainability assessment as applied to East Hoathly village in the Non-Statutory Plan is flawed.

The parish understands and accepts that it must continue to grow to maintain a sustainable community. The additional 75 homes planned for East Hoathly represent about a 40% increase in the size of the village before 2011. No community, rural or urban could sustain such growth over a short timescale without being fundamentally compromised. Growth of this magnitude in a rural community contravenes the SEERA Plan for the South East.

This second edition of the Parish Plan for East Hoathly with Halland follows the guiding principles of the SEERA Plan to set out a sustainable approach to development in the parish without destroying its social and economic structure and its sensitive ecosystem.

January 2007

ADDENDUM TO/UPDATE OF PREFACEThe previous preface introduced the Consultation Document – “Proposed Update of Parish Plan (2004)” that can be read as a blog on the Parish Council’s website.

The Parish Council has been challenging WDC’s Non-Statutory Plan since it was promulgated. Appeals to the Government Of Southeast England (GOSE), twice, the Ombudsman for Local Government and the Secretary of State for Local Government and Communities have been fruitless. The Parish Council instructed a nationally renowned firm of solicitors and their advice gave grounds for challenging the additional housing allocated to East Hoathly in the Non-Statutory Plan. The second application to GOSE based on the legal advice suggested that the application for Church Marks Lane was not based on established need, the development was premature and that part of the new housing was outside the agreed development envelope. Regretfully GOSE decided not to “call in” the Church Marks Lane application and that means the development will go ahead.

The Objectives in the Housing Section of the proposed update of the parish plan (that can still be viewed in its original format on the website) have had to be replaced with those shown in this latest document to reflect the GOSE’s decision.

At the time of drafting this addendum preface (July 07) WDC as part of its Local Development Framework published (2 July) an “Issues and Options Consultation Paper” for the period 2006 to 2026. This consultation, on potential sites for additional housing is part of WDC’s Core Strategy and suggests that East Hoathly has “Intermediate Growth Potential” but says that there should be no further growth beyond the 75 dwellings identified in the Non-Statutory Plan. However it is suggested that Halland has the potential to be an “Expanded Village” with an additional 1800 to 2800 additional dwellings.

July 2007

AMENDMENTS RESULTING FROM CONSULTATION

A parish meeting attended by approximately 100 parishioners was held in East Hoathly village hall 28 July 2007 specifically to discuss WDC’s “Issues and Options” consultation paper but also to seek views on the current draft of the Update of the Parish Plan. The Parish Council following the wishes of the meeting opposed WDC’s option that Halland might become an “Expanded Village” and happily, as a result of the consultation, WDC subsequently decided to withdraw Halland as a suggested Expanded Village. This final version of the Parish Plan reflects that decision and takes on board the comments made at the meeting about the Draft Parish Plan.

AMENDMENTS RESULTING FROM EVENTS POST JULY 2007

The Parish Council fought hard to have WDC impose, as a condition of planning approval, that the developers of the major housing schemes in East Hoathly should make contributions towards the costs of a new community centre in the village. Without this contribution the Parish Council felt unable to proceed with the project even though it had successfully come through the first phase of a grant from the Big Lottery in the order of half a million pounds.

January 2008

THE FABRIC OF THE PARISH

The parish of East Hoathly with Halland is old in historic terms. Both villages are mentioned in the Domesday Book. The Pelham family (Dukes of Newcastle) that produced two prime ministers resided in the parish. The historic core of East Hoathly is a designated conservation area containing many listed buildings including the Kings Head public house with thirteenth century origins. In more recent times the cricket club was formed in 1759 and Thomas Turner the Georgian Diarist lived in the village.

Halland village is a linear development along the busy A22 and B2192 roads. The traffic on both the roads is considerable and unacceptable for a rural village. The number, speed and size of vehicles is harming the life of the community.

The parish has a wealth of flora and fauna and habitats. East Hoathly village set in a necklace of ancient woodland is particularly rich, the most sensitive sites being located in the triangle formed by the A22, High St/South St and London Rd. At the southern end of the triangle, Moat Wood that was purchased by the villagers and handed to the Woodlands Trust for management has archaeological significance and is home to the rare black adder, nightingales, badgers and a host of wild plants. At the northern end of the triangle the Long Pond is home to water voles, great-crested and smooth newts, all protected species. Not far from the Long Pond on London Rd, is a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) designated on account of the rare orchids that grow there. The land between Moat Wood and the Long Pond has a colony of the small, pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly, another endangered species, very rare in Sussex and colonies of wasp spiders and the green tiger beetle; door mice, grass snakes and slow worms also inhabit this land. Given the nature of this land and the lake in Decoy Wood at the western boundary of the triangle it is likely that all these creatures are widespread. The area drains the village's playing fields and is prone, in parts, to flooding; nevertheless it is an invaluable area that enriches the whole community and should be retained as an undeveloped asset.

The parish changed little until World War Two. Since then the number of homes has increased between thirty and forty percent whilst the number of abundant village shops and businesses have almost disappeared.

The parish has a history as an inclusive community, not only have incomers been welcomed but they have been quickly assimilated. The population of the parish is about 1300 split roughly two thirds in East Hoathly and the balance in Halland. It is a vibrant community sustaining 18 clubs or societies, 3 public houses, a well-attended Anglican church and a well-utilised village hall and playing fields. Other religious denominations also have centres within the parish including a chapel in Halland. Although most employed people work outside the parish their homes and hearts are in the parish in the true sense of the sentiment.

The parish is distant from railway lines and the bus service, though welcome, is not capable of removing commuters from their cars. There is no direct bus service to the main London Brighton railway line or to the colleges in Lewes and Brighton. Commuters, adult and children, have to brave the traffic on a daily basis whilst walking between East Hoathly and Halland, an unacceptable situation resulting in many school children having to be ferried to and from their educational establishments by car. The length of the A22 that bisects the parish is the most dangerous section of the whole road with a record of many fatal accidents.

HOUSING

SEERA Policy

See appendix for details of:

- Policy BE6 – Village Management
- Policy C3 - Landscape and Countryside Management
- Policy CC8a – Urban Focus and Urban Renaissance
- Policy H3 – The Location of Housing

Background

Since the original Parish Plan was published in June 2004 Wealden District Council (WDC) without consultation increased the number of homes intended for East Hoathly from 65 to 80 (subsequently reduced to 75).

The Parish Council fought for the large brownfield site in East Hoathly village, comprising redundant buildings and land and willing sellers of existing businesses, designated for commercial use to be redesignated for mixed use and for the housing to be built on that site in preference to the greenfield sites. WDC's Non-Statutory Plan includes for 45 dwellings to be built on this site and another 30 dwellings to be built on the ecologically sensitive greenfield site at Church Marks Lane.

WDC's "Issues and Options Consultation Paper" (July 2007) covering the period 2006 to 2026 suggests no further additional housing in East Hoathly over and above the 75 in the Non-Statutory Plan.

OBJECTIVES

To control the growth in the provision of the number of new houses in accordance with SERA policy at a level and a rate that does not harm the community by:

Supporting the cap up to the year 2026 on further developments in East Hoathly village over at the 75 included in the Non-Statutory Plan as suggested in WDC's Issues and Options paper.

To correct the miss-match between the current size of households and the housing stock by:

Identifying the parish's need for Affordable and Small homes rather than relying on a formula arrived at outside the parish.

Working with the providers of "assisted" homes to help with the selection of tenants and to gain preferential treatment for people with a local connection.

Building a proportion of the allocation of small homes for sale with a high specification tailored to the needs of older downsizers possibly with some arrangement for the provision of support services.

To ensure the facilities of the parish are upgraded to cope with the new homes by:

Persuading WDC that housing developers should make a contribution towards the costs of improving facilities for the community.

COMMERCIAL

Background

The Parish Plan objective to expand rural commercial enterprises in redundant farm buildings has been too successful in that the amount of traffic on the rural lanes is becoming unsustainable. All the lanes are currently subject to the national 60mph speed limit even though, almost without exception, they are very narrow and twisty without provision for pedestrians. Because the lanes are over-trafficked the grass verges are rutted and disappearing to the extent that they no longer provide any safe refuge. Pedestrians especially those with children and dogs, and cyclists risk their lives on a daily basis. More commuters residing in the village will lead to even more country lanes turning into “rat-runs” and exacerbating the danger.

East Hoathly and Halland are dormitory villages with a commuting workforce. Even if the planned new commercial units are built the impact on local employment is likely to be minimal compared with the massive increase in commuters coming about as a result of additional housing.

OBJECTIVES

To encourage most of the commercial development in the parish to be located on the brownfield mixed development site in East Hoathly.

To establish a unique selling point for commercial development in East Hoathly by:

- Keeping all development to a “domestic” scale

- Attracting small “high-tech” businesses

- Designing and providing an environment for specialist groups such as artists and artisans to flourish

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION, UTILITIES AND POLICING

SEERA Policy

See appendix for details of:
Policy T2 – Rural Transport

See also: Department of Transport Circular 1/06 new guidance for setting local speed limits

Background

The main A22 London to Eastbourne Road bisects the Parish on a roughly north south axis, and this itself is a single carriageway road. The village of East Hoathly, used to be on the main A22 but is now by-passed although Halland is not, and is unlikely to be for some years to come. The remaining roads within the Parish are of a B or C classification being mainly small rural roads that join outlying communities and farm buildings. Some of the farm buildings have been put to the alternative use of light commercial, which whilst being welcomed by the Parish Council, and is in keeping with the objective of development and sustainability, it does mean that there is additional traffic on the narrow country lanes.

The National Speed limit applies on most of the roads in the Parish with the exception of the immediate village area of East Hoathly that has a limit of 30 miles per hour and Halland which is 40 miles per hour. There is a speed safety camera situated on the A22 in Halland controlling a dip in the road where visibility is poor.

The lack of a by-pass around Halland causes severe problems not only on the A22 but also particularly on the B2192 between Lewes and Heathfield that is increasingly used by traffic trying to avoid the A272 through Uckfield and Buxted.

Streetlights are sparse in the Parish with a small number of low powered lights within East Hoathly and main junction with the A22 including two roundabouts being permanently lit. There is no street lighting on the rural roads.

There are pavements for pedestrian use within both village confines, but on only one side of the A22 in Halland. None of the rural roads have pavements and more disturbingly there are none on the roads that link East Hoathly and Halland, a route frequently taken by those who need to use public transport for colleges and employment in Lewes and Brighton, as surprisingly there is still no direct link with those important towns.

Concern remains within the Parish of increased traffic with proposed development, which may have the effect of increasing East Hoathly village housing by 42%. Considerable concern has been expressed for increased traffic numbers during the building stage when to the dismay of the Parish generally, developers and planners intend that large construction vehicles will be using narrow residential roads in the heart of the village. Additional traffic will ensue from these developments with anticipated problems that have already been highlighted to the Local Authorities.

On the advice from the Highways Authority previous objectives with regard to encouraging members of the Parish to maintain highway edges verges has been removed as a substantial public liability insurance cover is required for these purposes. Whilst clearly a disappointment to those who have a feeling of responsibility to the community in which they live, the Parish Council cannot encourage such a community spirit having been so advised.

OBJECTIVES

To work with East Sussex County Council to reduce the speed limit on the London Road approach to East Hoathly and to extend the 30 mile per hour limit to encompass that part of the road that adjoins the War Memorial Playing Fields and to consider an effective Gateway to delineate the speed limit.

To work with East Sussex County Council to reduce the speed limits on all rural roads in line with the Department of Transport Guidelines and to encourage a more rapid implementation than currently proposed.

To work with East Sussex County Council to:

1. Lower the speed limits.
2. Relocate the speed signs in both villages.
3. Install speed reduction measures such as countdown signs, humps and additional cameras in Halland.
4. Imposed a weight limit on vehicles using the B2192 where the road is very close to house frontages.

To work with Sussex Police to ensure that current and new speed limits are enforced including exploring the use of a Speed Watch programme.

To work with all enforcement agencies to ensure that local views are taken into account when planning applications are submitted in particular to vehicular access and if appropriate, weight and size.

To seek rigorous restrictions on construction traffic during any development within the Parish and to further have in place enforcement procedures that will be strictly adhered to. Such restrictions to include but not exclusively, times that construction vehicles can enter and leave the village, directions of travel and use of proper washing facilities.

To seek to secure proper, safe footpaths including both sides of the A22 in Halland and a cycleway between East Hoathly and Halland.

To have all signposts in the Parish washed at least once a year and any damage rectified.

To seek a proper safe alternative to the current single carriageway routing of the A22 through Halland by extending the East Hoathly by pass around Halland to reunite the parish community.

UTILITIES

SEERA Policy

See appendix for details of:
Policy CC5 Infrastructure and Implementation

Background

The providers of electricity, water and drainage have historically poorly served parts of the parish. Flooding is an ever-present problem.

OBJECTIVES

To ensure that the parish has an appropriate infrastructure of services in place ready to meet demand before any development is in place by:

Lobbying providers to enhance existing services up to a standard that will meet existing and future demands.

Persuading WDC to secure condition S106 agreements from developers so that they contribute towards the costs of providing the new or upgraded services to meet the new demands placed on them.

POLICING

Background

Historically up to a few years ago the parish had its own designated police officer. More recently it has to make do with a Police Community Support Officer for its “beat” duties. The parish is not an area of high crime but does occasionally suffers from vandalism, graffiti, theft from outbuildings and speeding vehicles. The parachuting of 75 new homes in the centre of East Hoathly could make this situation worse as there is no provision for extra policing

OBJECTIVES

To ensure that the parish has an adequate police presence by:

The Parish Council meeting regularly with the PCSO and, if required, his supervising officer. These discussions will take place at a Parish Council meeting that the public can attend and ask questions.

FOOTPATHS, TREES AND PONDS

SEERA Policy

See appendix for details of:

Policy C4 Countryside Access and Rights of Way Management

Background

The parish is a thriving community. There is a network of footpaths including the ancient Vanguard Way, the Weald Way and the more recent Millennium Walk. The area is one of great beauty that should be handled sensitively by any new development. There is important and rare flora and fauna and the protection of such wildlife should be a priority. This includes the village ponds and the Long pond could be an important amenity. Industrialisation of the countryside must be resisted.

OBJECTIVES

To preserve the “right to roam” and the use of ancient woodlands upholding the reasons why they were originally established.

To conserve trees and woodlands.

To adopt the footpath behind Halland forge as its use has been established by prescription.

To reinstate and clearly mark the Millennium Walk.

To prevent electric fences being erected alongside footpaths.

To develop the Long Pond as an important community amenity.

To have Footpaths regularly maintained by those responsible for their upkeep.

To complete the installation of Kissing Gates.

To encourage parish residents to appreciate and value the rich diversity of its footpaths, trees and ponds that contributes so much to the health and well being of the community.

RECREATION

Background

The main centres for recreation in the parish are East Hoathly village hall built in 1926 and the War Memorial Sports Ground established in 1947. A pavilion was built on the Sports Ground in 1980. Currently there are no recreational facilities in Halland.

The village hall is not just an old, failing building, its size is inadequate for present day activities and it has no changing facilities or dedicated parking. Some of the activities carried out in the hall overlap those carried out in the pavilion. The short mat bowls club that meets in the hall twice weekly cannot achieve its ambition to play in a league because the mats, restricted by the length of the hall, are two metres short of the mandatory length. Age Concern another major user of the hall, due to the hall's restricted height, has to ferry its badminton group to a hall in another village. The hall has a safety limit on the number of people set at seventy-five. At a recent public meeting one hundred and twenty people turned up.

The sports pavilion is of simple brick construction within a steel agricultural frame with an asbestos roof. By modern standards it is woefully small and inadequate. On match days the facilities are frequently overwhelmed. The pavilion has no proper changing facilities for ladies or referees and is very unfriendly towards the disabled. The thriving tennis club is restricted in arranging fixtures with other clubs because it cannot offer proper facilities for ladies. The lack of facilities for ladies is stopping females of all ages and abilities in the parish from taking part in sport. There is no room for indoor sports. There is a badly surfaced carpark that cannot cope for the number of vehicles arriving on match or training days. Cars often park at the side of the road causing a traffic hazard.

In 2000 architects designed and obtained outline planning permission for a new building to replace the pavilion on the Sports Ground that could also accommodate the facilities provided by the village hall. This scheme did not go ahead due to lack of funds.

In September 2006 all households in the parish were polled on the preferred location for a new village hall. The overwhelming number of votes cast favoured the War Memorial Playing Fields.

The case for replacing the village hall (indoor sports) and pavilion (outdoor sports) with a single building acting as a Community Centre on the War Memorial Playing Fields has many advantages. Combining the functions of both buildings will give economies of scale such as shared communal spaces, changing rooms and showers. Parking will not be a problem and most importantly the new building will give the community a facility that meets their needs now and in the future, something the existing buildings cannot do.

OBJECTIVES

To provide the parish of East Hoathly with Halland with recreational facilities worthy of a forward looking, thriving village community of the twenty-first century by:

Raising finance for and building a community centre that combines all the facilities of a traditional village hall and a modern sports pavilion on the War Memorial Sports Field in East Hoathly. This will be done by:

Obtaining seed-corn funding from new housing development in the parish.
Securing Lottery Funding.

Borrowing against the future sale of the existing village hall.

Providing multi-purpose facilities that benefit the whole community from the school to agencies such as Age Concern.

Embarking on sustained grounds maintenance programme to bring the playing surfaces to an adequate standard.

Continuing to improve the children's play area.

To examine the need for recreational facilities in Halland and if a requirement is established to:

Verify location.

Produce an Action Plan for providing the facility.

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOSYSTEM

SEERA Policy

See appendix for details of:

Policy C3 – Landscape and Countryside Management

Background

The planned 40%+ growth in the number of homes in East Hoathly village threatens to destroy the ecosystem. The planned 30 new homes in Church Marks Lane in the centre of the most sensitive part of the village will cause irreparable damage.

OBJECTIVES

To protect the ecosystem of East Hoathly and Halland villages in accordance with SEERA policy by:

Reinforcing the ceiling on the number of new homes to be built in East Hoathly between 2006 and 2026 at a total of 75.

Opposing any development on the land contained within the triangle formed by High St./South St. / London Rd /A22.

Fencing off very vulnerable sites.

Placing restrictions on public access and dogs not on leads during sensitive times such as breeding seasons.

APPENDIX

POLICY STATEMENTS IN THE SEERA DRAFT PLAN

(Note. The following policy statements are not fully stated in every case – limited editing has taken place so as not to produce parts of the statements that are not applicable to the context of a rural village community.)

Policy BE6 Village Management

In preparing their Local Development Documents, local planning Authorities should positively plan for limited small scale affordable housing, business and service development in villages to meet defined local needs (e.g. affordable housing) and protect or extend key local services in accordance with rigorous design and sustainability criteria. To assist this, local planning authorities should encourage community-led local assessments of need and action planning to inform decision-making processes.

The South East Plan Draft Submission to Government March 2006 paragraph 7.1 states:

Limited small scale development can help meet the specific local housing, business and service needs of individual rural settlements, preferably through community led mechanisms such as Parish Plans.

Policy CC8a Urban Focus and Urban Renaissance

The prime focus for development in the South East should be in urban areas, in order to foster accessibility to employment, housing, retail and other services and avoid unnecessary travel. Local planning authorities should formulate policies to:

- 1 Concentrate development within the region's urban areas.
- ETC

Policy H3 The Location of Housing

New housing needed to meet district requirements – whether on previously developed land or greenfield land – should be in sustainable locations which have the necessary infrastructure, service, and community provision, or where provision is planned. Housing development should generally be in locations that are, or can be, well served by a choice of transport modes, with higher densities in and near locations well served by local transport.

In rural areas some housing development will be needed in order to meet identified social or economic needs and provision should be set out in policies in Local Development Documents. Parish Plans and local housing assessments will have a key role to play in establishing the extent and type of needs for housing in villages.

Policy T2 Rural Transport

Local Transport Plans covering areas that are not wholly urban should:

1. Take a coordinated approach to encouraging community-based transport in areas of need.
2. Include a rural dimension to transport and traffic management policies, including looking for opportunities to improve provision for cyclists and pedestrians between towns and their nearest villages.
3. Develop innovative and adaptable approaches to public transport in rural areas that reflect the particular and longer-term social and economic characteristics of the region.

Policy C3 Landscape and Countryside Management

Outside nationally designated landscapes, positive and high quality management of the region's open countryside should be supported by local authorities and other organisations, agencies, land managers, the private sector and local communities, through a combination of planning policies, grant aid and other measures, in order to:

1. Protect and enhance its distinctive qualities
2. Encourage the sustainable management of land and habitats in ways which contribute to landscape conservation and renewal, avoiding fragmentation of landscapes and habitats and encouraging linking of habitats
3. Support local economies and social well being of communities through small-scale development to meet local needs

Landscape Character Assessments should be used to contribute to the framing of the development policies and sustainable agri-environment, and other land management regimes.

Policy C4 Countryside Access and Rights of Way Management

Local Authorities, through Rights of Way Improvement Plans and other measures, should encourage access to the countryside, taking full advantage of the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000, particularly by:

1. Maintaining, enhancing and promoting the Public Rights of Way system, and permissive longer distance routes, to facilitate access within, to and from the countryside for visitors and all members of the community
2. Identifying opportunities and planning for routes within and between settlements, seeking to reduce car use for shorter journeys
3. Where possible, making new routes multi-functional to allow pedestrians, horses and cyclists to use them

Policy CC5 Infrastructure and Implementation

The scale and pace of development will be dependent on their being sufficient capacity in existing infrastructure to meet the area's current needs and the provision of new infrastructure to meet the needs of new development.

Policy CC12 Character of the Environment and Quality of Life.

Actions and decisions associated with development and use of land should actively encourage the conservation and, where appropriate, the enhancement of the character, distinctiveness and sense of place of settlements and landscapes throughout the region. Opportunities for creating a high quality environment should be sought, based on a shared vision that places emphasis on good design, innovation, sustainability and a high quality of life.

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