

Committee: **Regulatory  
Planning Committee**

Date: **12 December 2007**

Report by: **Director of Transport and Environment**

Proposal: **Outline proposal for the erection of a mixed use development comprising sixth form college, library, surgery, public open space, and 250 dwellings (comprising 40 sheltered, 75 affordable and 135 open market houses) with associated access, landscaping and parking.**

Site Address: **Land east of Battle Road and adjoining the Leisure Centre car park, Hailsham.**

Application No: **WD/2007/2856/MAO**

Applicant: **Hillreed Developments Ltd.**

Strategic Issues: 

- **Need for Housing**
- **Transport**
- **Landscape and environment**
- **County Council infrastructure**
- **Waste**

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**RECOMMENDATION:-**

**EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL STRATEGIC REPRESENTATIONS**

**To resolve to inform Wealden District Council that:-**

**1. The principle of a mixed use scheme including housing on this site outside the development boundary for Hailsham is supported in principle as a departure from the development plan. Furthermore there is no strategic planning objection in principle to a larger housing element than the Non Statutory Local Plan allocates for this site, but the precise amount of housing should be determined by transport, landscape and environmental considerations and not just by the physical capacity of the site. Wealden District Council should therefore not approve the current application unless it is satisfied that the amount of residential development proposed has an acceptable transport, landscape and environmental impact (policy S1 (d), (f), (g) (h) (j)).**

**2. Were Wealden minded to approve the application, the provisions in the proposed legal agreement for the amount of land for a 16 – 19 college and for new library premises appear to be broadly acceptable. The County Council would, however, also require financial contributions to these and other County Council services as advised by the Council's Development Contributions Coordinator. Any approval should also be conditioned to secure:-**

**a) the Highway Authority's requirements for this site; and**

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**b) the minimisation of waste (Structure Plan policy W10, Waste Local Plan policy WLP11 and Construction and Demolition Waste Supplementary Planning Document).**

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## **SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS ON KEY ISSUES**

### 1. Need for Housing

1.1 The application site has been allocated for low intensity development because of concern about landscape impact. The site is, however, sustainably located in relation to Hailsham town centre and its facilities. In a context where Wealden is consulting on an LDF looking to meet development needs forward to 2026, a higher level of housing development on this site could represent a sustainable urban extension of Hailsham. The level of development should, however, be determined by what is compatible with an acceptable transport, landscape and environmental impact but these have not yet been established in the case of this application. The current application should therefore not be approved by Wealden until and unless these impacts are demonstrated to be acceptable (structure plan policies S1(d), TR3, EN1 and EN17).

### 2. Transport

2.1 Although the site lies close to Hailsham town centre, with its range of retail and service industries, enabling effective promotion of walking and cycling trips from this development, it also means that access to the strategic road network is likely to take place through the town centre. The capacity of the town centre to accommodate this, with particular regard to the NSLP and the Hailsham and Polegate Transportation Study, is being investigated by the Highway Authority. The mitigating measures required, and the feasibility of those measures, are also under investigation. Any conclusions reached by the time of the Planning Committee will be reported verbally.

### 3. Landscape and Environment

3.1 The application seeks to address the site's sensitivities through planned open space within the site. However the acceptability of more intensive development on this site can only be judged in terms of a careful design approach and the degree to which the development protects the most important aspects of landscape character and mitigates environmental impact, particularly on Pevensy Levels, and these factors have not yet been satisfactorily resolved by this outline application.

### 4. County Council Infrastructure

4.1 The application is required by local plan policy HA12 to provide land for community facilities including a 16 -19 educational facility and a library. The illustrative proposals in this application, along with the offer of a legal agreement to provide land and financial contributions, set out to meet the County Council's broad requirements. However, as an outline application, precise details and location of the land are yet to be assured, and depend upon the development of a scheme which

meets all planning requirements. The County Council's Development Contributions Coordinator has advised on the financial contributions required.

### 5. Waste minimisation

5.1 Were Wealden District Council minded to approve this application, any approval should require the developer to seek to minimise waste generation as far as practicable and consider its reuse on site in accordance with guidance given in the Construction and Demolition Waste Supplementary Planning Document (Structure Plan policy W10 and Waste Local Plan policy WLP11).

RUPERT CLUBB  
Director of Transport and Environment  
4 December 2007

Contact Officer: Graham Arr-Jones 01273 481615  
Local Members: Councillor Bill Bentley  
Councillor Roger Thomas

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

1. East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan 1991-2011
2. Wealden Local Plan – adopted December 1998
3. Non Statutory Wealden Local Plan – December 2005
4. Submitted South East Plan – March 2006
5. Memo from Senior Landscape Architect dated 23 November 2007
6. Letter from Development Contributions Coordinator dated 19 November 2007

### CONSIDERATION OF THE ISSUES

#### 1. Site

1.1 The application site consists of approximately 11.5ha of land located on the edge of Hailsham town centre adjacent to the leisure centre and car park in Vicarage Lane. The site slopes gently down from the existing edge of development towards the Pevensey Levels, with a shallow valley running very broadly south-west to east across the site. Parts of the area are open to long views from the countryside and Levels to the east, and from the north.

1.2 The site is agricultural grazing land, composed of 10 small fields of various sizes with strong field boundaries, mature hedges and oak trees. The site is crossed by a public right of way from Hailsham town centre to Harebeating Lane. Where the site adjoins the existing developed edge of Hailsham, it is bounded by residential development, the district council civic offices / leisure centre and car park, and the site of the new White House primary school, which is being built off Marshfoot Lane. To the north and east the site is bounded by established hedgerows and farmland.

1.3 Unusually for a rural area the application site lies immediately adjacent to Hailsham town centre. Although allocated in the Wealden Non Statutory Local Plan (2005) (NSLP) for community facilities and a limited amount of housing (50 dwellings in a flatted development), the site was not included within the development boundary for Hailsham in the NSLP. The application therefore remains outside the development boundary for Hailsham in both the Statutory Wealden Local Plan (1998) and the NSLP.

#### 2. The Proposal

2.1 The proposal is in outline for 250 dwellings, health surgery, college, library and public open space. Means of access only is to be determined at this outline stage, however, drawings accompanying the application indicate land allocations within the site which would accommodate a sixth form / FE building of 5,000sq.m., a library of 800 sq.m., a 4 doctor GP surgery and 3.2ha of public open space as well as wildlife areas and playing fields for the college. Access to the major part of the site would be provided from Battle Road with a subsidiary access from Marshfoot Lane. Route alignment and traffic management measures would be used to reduce the attractiveness of the development as a through route from Battle Road to and from Marshfoot Lane. The Battle Road access would be traffic signalled. The application states that an opportunity exists for a third point of pedestrian and public transport access via the leisure centre car park owned by Wealden District Council.

2.2 The illustrative drawings show a layout with sites allocated for the college building and grounds close to the existing Hailsham Community College in the south western part of the site, and with land for library use co-located with the GP surgery in a visible position close to the existing town centre edge. A wedge of open space is proposed linking the civic buildings with open countryside and views to Pevensey Levels. The illustrative housing layout shows most housing located on the lower part of the site, away from the existing urban edge. The applicants consider this is the most visually contained part of the site. A much smaller amount of housing is

proposed at the eastern end of the site, adjacent to the new White House primary school site.

2.3 The application includes reference to draft heads of a S106 Agreement granting an option to acquire to the County Council on 4.5ha of land for provision of a 5,000sq.m. sixth form / FE college and on 02ha of land for provision of an 800sq.m. library, in the positions indicated on the illustrative drawings. Financial contributions would be offered to nursery and primary school places, household waste facilities, and rights of way and off-site highway works.

### **3. Comments / Appraisal**

3.1 The Development Plan policy context for this proposal is set by RPG9, the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan 1991 – 2011, the Wealden Local Plan (1998) and the Non Statutory Wealden Local Plan (2005). Although non statutory, the 2005 Plan is a significant material consideration because of the substantial amount of work and public consultation that Wealden District Council has undertaken in producing it. The emerging South East Plan (submitted March 2006) is also a material policy consideration.

3.2 The strategic issues raised by this application are:-

- need for housing
- transport
- landscape and environment
- county council infrastructure
- waste

#### Need for Housing

3.3 Hailsham is one of the Low Weald towns within Wealden identified in Structure Plan policy as the focus for new allocations of housing land within the district to meet Structure Plan housing provision (policy H1). Structure Plan policy for Hailsham (policy S20) provides for the prospect of major peripheral expansion of the town for housing and associated facilities to meet the new strategic housing allocations required for 2006 – 2011. The scale, nature and location of any such strategic housing allocation is to be determined through the local plan, and is subject to the availability of appropriate transport infrastructure and any other necessary measures, to ensure that it would not add to transport problems both locally and in the wider area. Some additional local employment provision will be required to serve both existing and future residents (policies S3 and TR3).

3.4 The Wealden Non Statutory Local Plan allocates land for a total of 1220 dwellings at Hailsham as part of its distribution strategy to meet Structure Plan housing requirements for Wealden District. Where land has been allocated for housing in the NSLP the former development boundary for Hailsham in the statutory Wealden Local Plan has been redrawn in the NSLP to include these sites. Even so applications have had to be dealt with as departures as they are outside the development boundary in the Statutory Development Plan. The current application site, however, was left outside the revised development boundary in the NSLP because it was not favoured as a location for major housing development. This is because of the impact of development here on landscape, biodiversity and views from Pevensy Levels. The site was, however, considered suitable for community facilities with extensive open land requirements, which were considered to have the

potential to soften the impact both of new buildings and the existing urban edge of Hailsham (policy HA12 NSLP).

3.5 As a site outside the development boundary for Hailsham in the statutory Wealden Local Plan (1998) structure plan countryside policy applies. This requires proposals for new development to demonstrate that a countryside location is necessary and that a town or village location would not be suitable (policy S10). The application therefore needs to be treated as a departure from development plan policy. Nevertheless, the allocation of the whole of the application site in the NSLP for mixed development, even though predominantly for community facilities, and with considerable open space, is a material consideration. The current proposal appears to provide for the full range of community facilities required by the NSLP, together with a five fold increase in the number of dwellings on the site. It is able to achieve this at densities comparable to other new development in Hailsham because of the extensive area incorporated in the NSLP allocation. While this may be regarded as an efficient use of land, in this case, the sensitivity of its location is a justification for a lower density of development.

3.6 The site is very close to the town centre of Hailsham and thus in a potentially sustainable location for new housing, as the town centre is within easy cycling and walking distance of the proposed development. Although most of the allocated housing sites in Hailsham now have planning permission, there is no strategic objection in principle to additional housing at Hailsham on land that has been allocated for development, particularly in the context set by the recent consultation on Wealden's emerging Local Development Framework, which is considering development needs forward to 2026.

3.7 The amount of development that would be acceptable on this site, however, given its sensitive location, should be set through consideration of acceptable impact on transport, landscape and the environment, and not just by the amount of development that can be physically accommodated on the site.

#### Transport impact

3.8 The proposal in this application is that the majority of the traffic generated by the development should gain access to Hailsham's road network at Battle Road, just north of the junction with Battle Crescent. Although the site's proximity to Hailsham town centre, with its range of retail and service industries, should enable effective promotion of walking and cycling trips from this development, it also means that access to the strategic road network is likely to take place through the town centre. The capacity of the town centre to accommodate this, with particular regard to the planned developments in the NSLP and the results of the Hailsham and Polegate Transportation Study (Nov 2004) are being investigated by the Highway Authority. The Transportation Study is a key document and the applicant is being asked to address how the development can be accommodated, including the mitigating measures needed and the feasibility of those measures. At the time of writing this report no conclusions have been reached. Any conclusions reached by the time of the Planning Committee will be reported verbally, but the proposal must conform with structure plan transport policy (policy T3) and meet the Highway Authority's requirements.

## Landscape and environment

3.9 The important landscape constraints on this site were recognised in the NSLP policy, which deliberately left the site outside the revised development boundary for Hailsham. The historic landscape structure is largely intact with strong field boundaries, mature hedges and oak trees and there is a sensitive relationship between the urban edge of Hailsham and the low, flat, open landscape of the adjoining Pevensey Levels. Development here has an opportunity to improve that relationship.

3.10 The application seeks to address the site's sensitivities through planned open space within the site. However, the design approach shown, whatever its merits, is illustrative only whereas the amount of development is committed. The acceptability of more intensive development on this site than that envisaged in the NSLP, can only be judged in terms of the design approach adopted and the degree to which the development protects the important aspects of landscape character.

3.11 The site lies some 700 metres from the boundary of the Pevensey Levels SSSI, a Ramsar site, and any development will need to provide appropriate protection.

## County Council infrastructure

### Childrens Services

3.12 The Director of Childrens Services advises that Hailsham Community College (HCC) could not accommodate the number of additional youngsters of secondary school age expected to arise from new housing in the area and that there is no space to increase capacity on the existing HCC site. However, policy HA12 in the NSLP outlines proposals to provide the additional secondary school capacity required through a new facility for students aged 16 to 19 on land within the current application site. The current application suggests a legal agreement which would give the County Council an option to acquire 4.5ha of land for such a facility, capable of accommodating a building of 5.000sq.m.

3.13 Were Wealden to permit the development, the County Council would expect the development to contribute through legal agreement the land offered in this application as well as a financial contribution to the costs of early years, primary and secondary education.

### Library services

3.14 Additional library facilities are needed to serve the additional population arising from the new housing planned in the NSLP. The legal agreement would also give the County Council an option to acquire 0.2 ha of land for a new library building, located close to existing town centre facilities at the Leisure Centre. Were Wealden to permit the development the County Council would expect the development to contribute this land along with a financial contribution to the costs of library services.

3.15 Contributions would also be expected from the development towards household waste and rights of way provision.

## Waste minimisation

3.16 Construction activity generates a considerable amount of waste and the management of this waste should be an active feature of all development. The Sustainability Assessment accompanying the application includes no measures to deal with construction waste. Were Wealden minded to approve development on this site it should require the developer to minimise waste generation arising from demolition and construction as far as practicable and consider its reuse on site. An appropriate waste minimisation condition should be imposed in line with Structure Plan policy W10 and Waste Local Plan policy WLP11 and the Construction and Demolition Waste supplementary planning document.

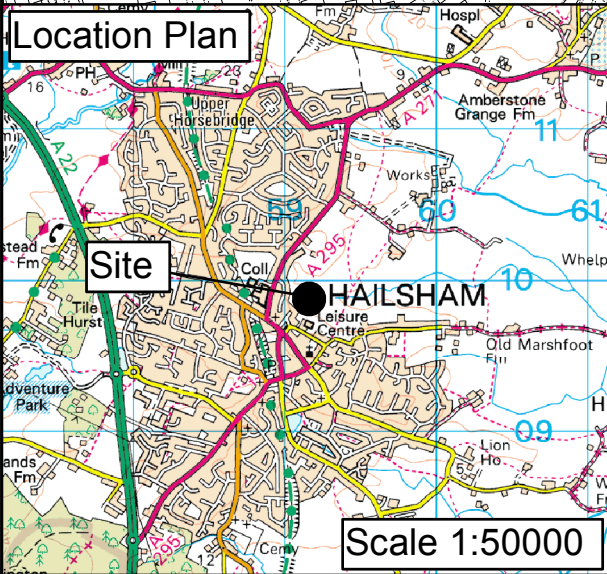
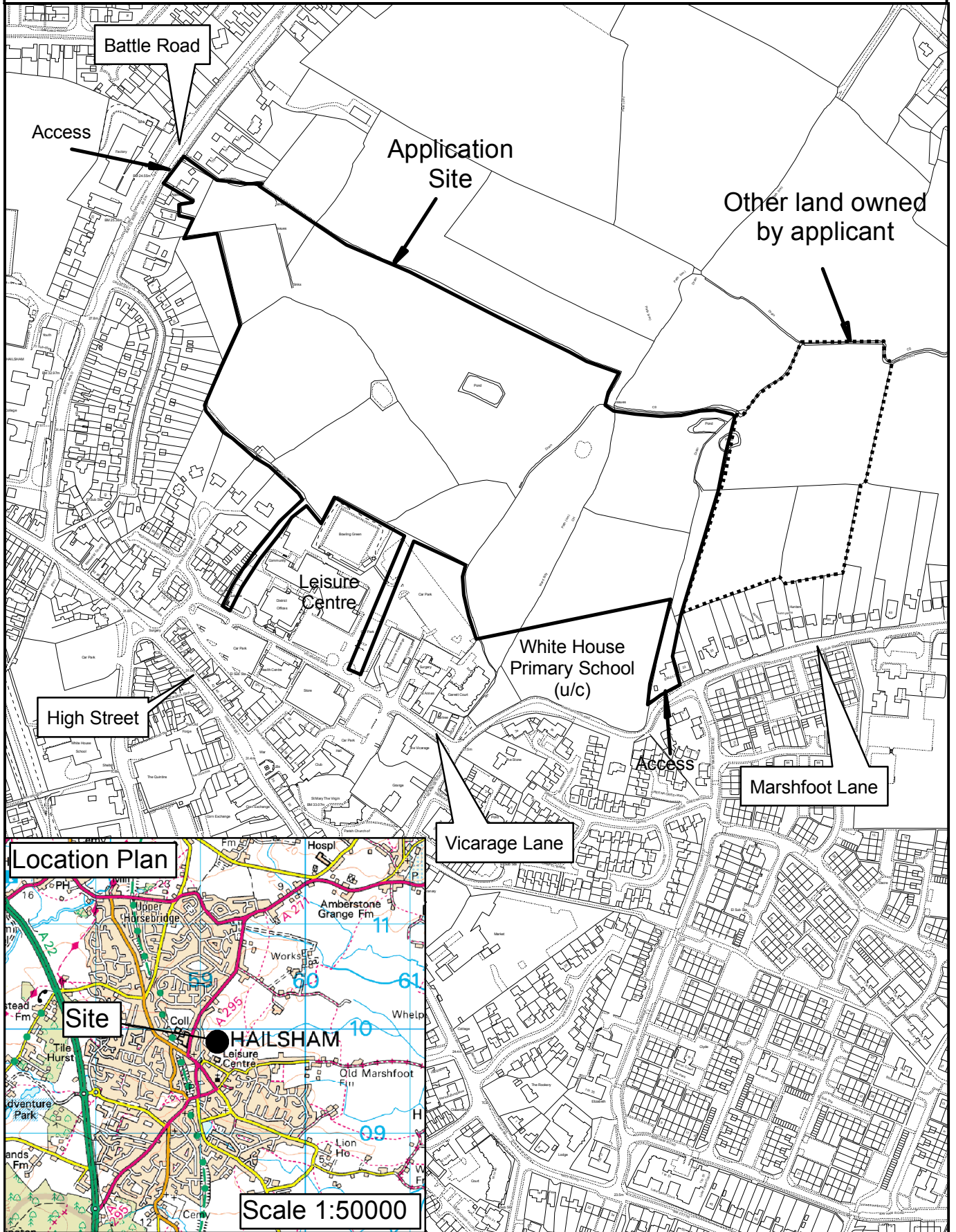
## **Conclusions**

4.1 The application site has been allocated for low intensity development because of landscape concerns; however it is sustainably located in relation to Hailsham town centre and its facilities. In a context where Wealden is consulting on an LDF looking to meet development needs forward to 2026, a higher level of housing development on this site, if it meets transport and environmental criteria, could represent a sustainable urban extension of Hailsham. However, that level of development should be determined by what is compatible with an acceptable transport, landscape and environmental impact. The current application, if approved, would pre-determine the amount of residential development and should not be approved by Wealden unless and until these impacts are demonstrated to be acceptable (structure plan policies S1 (d), TR3, EN1 and EN17).

4.2 The amount of land provided within the illustrative drawings for the 16 -19 educational facility and a library, is acceptable, although as part of an illustrative layout the precise details and location cannot be assured in this application and the County Council would want to continue discussions with the applicant to ensure appropriate provision is made.

4.3 The transport impact of the development is currently under investigation. Any conclusions available in time for the Planning Committee's consideration of this report will be made available to the Committee but the proposal should meet the requirements of the Highway Authority.

WD/2007/2856



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Rupert Clubb  
BEng (Hons) CEng MICE  
Director, Transport and Environment  
East Sussex County Council

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