

Committee: **Regulatory  
Planning Committee**

Date: **13 June 2007**

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

Proposal: **Outline application for the erection of 197 dwellings, including affordable housing, with associated access, structural landscaping and recreational space.**

Site Address: **Bird in Eye Farm South, Uckfield.**

Application No: **WD/2006/3564**

Applicant: **Heron Land Developments, Persimmon Homes and Gallagher Estates.**

Strategic Issues: 

- need for housing
- transport infrastructure
- other infrastructure
- archaeological impact

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**RECOMMENDATION:-**

**EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL STRATEGIC REPRESENTATIONS**

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

**1. The proposal represents development in the countryside outside the development boundary for Uckfield in the adopted Wealden Local Plan and is therefore contrary to Structure Plan countryside policy (policy S10). Provided Wealden District Council is satisfied that the sites allocated within the Non-Statutory Local Plan can be bought forward in a timely way to meet the housing provision for Wealden District set out in policy H1(b) of the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan, then there is no case for bringing forward this site for housing development as a departure from development plan policy. However, if Wealden District Council is minded to approve this application, the site would be subject to the same town centre transport infrastructure requirements as the allocated sites.**

**2. The site may have the potential in the longer term to be a sustainable urban extension to Uckfield but this potential would need to be examined in the context of the District Council's Local Development Framework which would be able to examine the sustainability of alternative distribution strategies for Wealden including transport and other infrastructure needed.**

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

### **1. The Proposal**

1.1 The proposals are in outline for a residential development on land at Bird in Eye (South) Uckfield. A total of 197 dwellings are proposed with associated access, structural landscaping and recreational space. Of the 9.6 hectare site, approximately 6.1 hectares is proposed for residential development, the remainder comprising Framfield stream floodplain. A safe pedestrian link to Harlands County Primary School and footpath/cycle links would also be provided through the site and to connect to the existing primary school.

### 2. Need for housing

2.1 The application site is not allocated in the Non-Statutory Local Plan as part of Wealden's Housing Distribution Strategy which allocates land at Uckfield and other low weald towns to meet Structure Plan housing provision for Wealden District during the period 2006-2011 (policy H1).

2.2 The site lies outside the Uckfield development boundary set in the adopted Wealden Local Plan (1998). Provided Wealden District Council is satisfied that the allocated sites in the Non-Statutory Local Plan will deliver structure plan housing provision within the 2006 – 2011 period, there is no requirement at this stage for further greenfield housing development to accommodate structure plan requirements and therefore no basis to support this application as a departure from Structure Plan countryside policy S10.

### 3. Transport infrastructure

3.1 The development, if approved, would have an impact upon traffic congestion within Uckfield town centre. Throughout the Local Plan Review process the County Council has consistently raised the issue of the impact of proposed housing allocations on congestion and associated safety issues in Uckfield town centre and the need for an appropriate Uckfield town centre highway scheme to deal with these issues.

3.2 A detailed scheme has not yet been produced, however, proportionate contributions to an eventual scheme will be required from all of the development sites at Uckfield allocated in the distribution strategy in the Non-Statutory Local Plan as well as any additional sites that come forward for development. Without a detailed transport scheme, the development proposal will create unacceptable traffic and transport conditions, and also be in conflict with development plan policies for transport and infrastructure (Structure Plan S1(d), TR3, S3; Wealden Local Plan CS1, Non-Statutory Local Plan CS1, and South West Plan policies CC5iii and iv, H3).

3.3 As well as development contributions to an Uckfield Town Centre scheme there would also be a requirement to contribute towards other transport and County Council infrastructure.



## **CONSIDERATION OF THE ISSUES**

### **1. The Site**

1.1 The application site is located on the eastern edge of Uckfield and consists of predominantly open grassland covering an area of approximately 9.6 hectares. The site slopes up west to east from Framfield stream to Bird in Eye Farm with vehicular access from Bird in Eye Hill (B2102) to the North East of the site. The south and west boundary of the site are adjacent to areas of ancient woodland.

### **2. The Proposal**

2.1 The proposals are in outline for a residential development of 197 dwellings with associated access, structural landscaping and recreational space. Of the 9.6 hectare site, approximately 6.1 hectares is proposed for residential development, the remainder comprising Framfield stream floodplain. A safe pedestrian link to Harlands County Primary School and footpath/cycle links would also be provided through the site and to connect to the existing primary school.

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

3.1 The strategic issues raised with this application are:-

- the need for housing
- transport infrastructure
- other infrastructure
- archaeological impacts
- impact on the landscape

#### Policy Context

3.2 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.

#### a) Need for Housing

3.3 Uckfield is a Low Weald town that has been identified in the Structure Plan as an area that will be the focus of new allocations of housing land in Wealden District to meet structure plan housing provision up to 2011 (Policy H1). Structure Plan policy (S22) seeks to develop Uckfield's functions as a residential, employment, shopping and service centre. This policy also provides for major peripheral expansion of housing and associated facilities as part of the strategic housing allocations required for 2006-2011. The scale, nature and location of any such allocation is to be determined through the local plan process and is subject to the availability of appropriate transport infrastructure and any other measures to ensure that it would not add to transport problems both locally and in the wider area.

3.4 The application site lies outside the development boundary for Uckfield set out in the Statutory Wealden Local Plan (1998) and hence represents a departure from adopted local plan and structure plan policy. The application site is part of a larger area which was proposed for housing development (for 500 dwellings) in the First Deposit Draft of the Wealden Local Plan Review. Following public consultation on the First Deposit Draft of the Plan, the Wealden Local Plan Review Committee reconsidered the proposed housing allocations at Uckfield and selected alternative sites for housing development on the edge of Uckfield at Eastbourne Road and Sandpits, retaining only part of the Bird in Eye site, at Mallard Drive. An application for 146 dwellings at Land North of Mallard Drive has been approved as well as applications for 220 dwellings at Land North of Eastbourne Road and 61 dwellings at Sandpits. These sites would bring forward the 400 dwellings allocated to Uckfield by the District Council for the Structure Plan period 2006 - 2011.

3.5 While the application site could provide an acceptable development opportunity, it has been the County Council's policy to support the allocations made as a result of the housing distribution strategy in the Non-Statutory Local Plan, provided Wealden District Council is satisfied that they will deliver the structure plan provision for Wealden District for the period 2006 – 2011. The sites allocated in the Non-Statutory Local Plan have been selected as a result of an extensive public consultation exercise, including consultation with county council service interests. The sites can therefore be supported in principle as departures from the adopted Wealden Local Plan 1998. However, in accepting allocated sites in the Non - Statutory Local Plan the County Council had serious reservations about transport infrastructure at Uckfield and those reservations apply to this site also.

3.6 Provided Wealden District Council is satisfied that the allocated sites in the Non-Statutory Local Plan will deliver structure plan housing provision within the 2006 – 2011 period, there is no requirement at this stage for further greenfield housing development to accommodate structure plan requirements and therefore no basis to support this application as a departure from countryside policy in the Structure Plan and Statutory Local Plan.

#### b) Transport Infrastructure

3.7 The proposal should meet Structure Plan Policy S1(d) and TR3 by demonstrating how the creation of traffic and transport problems can be avoided. The development proposal must also comply with policies for infrastructure (policies S3 and TR3(d)) whereby the development should not be permitted until Wealden District Council is satisfied that the infrastructure and facilities required to service the developments are available or will be provided. This approach is supported in policy CS1 in the Wealden Local Plan (adopted 1998) policy CS1 in the Non-Statutory Local Plan (2005) and by policy in the submitted South East Plan (March 2006) (policies CC5iii and iv, H3).

3.8 The impact of the proposal on traffic congestion in Uckfield town centre needs to be considered as any significant housing proposal is likely to impact upon the existing poor traffic conditions in Uckfield town centre. The Highway Authority considers that additional traffic generating development in Uckfield would lead to an unacceptable increase in existing safety hazards and unacceptable traffic conditions in Uckfield town centre, an area that is already heavily congested at peak times.

3.9 The overall view of the County Council is that the allocations of new homes proposed for Uckfield will generate extra traffic and should contribute towards the cost of a town centre highway improvement scheme. Without such a scheme the housing allocations in the Non-Statutory Wealden Local Plan will exacerbate the existing poor transport conditions and lead to unacceptable traffic and transport conditions, thereby conflicting with development plan policies for transport and infrastructure (Structure Plan S1(d), TR3, S3; Wealden Local Plan CS1, Non-Statutory Local Plan CS1, South East Plan CC5iii and iv, H3). If Wealden District Council wishes to approve this proposal, proportionate contributions to an eventual transport scheme will be required from this development.

#### c) Other County Council Infrastructure

3.10 The County Council's Development Contributions Co-ordinator advises that the existing primary schools serving Uckfield are capable of accommodating this proposal as well as the allocated site proposals (427 dwellings). However, existing nursery and secondary school provision within Uckfield could not accommodate the number of additional children/students expected to arise from this proposed development in addition to the allocated sites.

3.11 If Wealden District Council is minded to approve the application, contributions will be required towards nursery and secondary school places. Contributions would also be required towards the development of a new household waste and recycling site at Maresfield and to rights of way improvements.

#### d) Archaeological impact

3.12 At present there is a lack of specific detailed information about the archaeological resource within the area. In light of this, the County Archaeologist has recommended to Wealden District Council that if it wishes to approve the application, a programme of archaeological work is undertaken, in accordance with a written scheme of investigation and an appropriate condition attached.

#### e) Impact upon the landscape

3.13 Development of this site for housing could be acceptable in landscape terms, however, the illustrative layout indicates that the development would not integrate sufficiently well with its surroundings and the rest of the town.