

Attendees

<b>AB</b>	Adam Berger	Locate East Sussex	<b>JB</b>	Jonathan Buckwell	(DES CHAIR) DHA Planning
<b>AP</b>	Andrew Palmer	Hastings BC / ES Housing/Planning Officers Groups	<b>JH</b>	Josh Hemmings	Homes England
<b>BC</b>	Barry Chamberlain	Wealden Homes	<b>JMe</b>	Joshua Mellor	Barton Willmore
<b>BH</b>	Brian Horton	SELEP	<b>JS</b>	John Slaughter	Home Builders Federation (HBF)
<b>CBe</b>	Chris Bending	Wealden DC	<b>KBo</b>	Kevin Bown	Highways England
<b>CBr</b>	Chris Broome	Sea Change Sussex	<b>KBx</b>	Kim Bloxham	East Sussex CC
<b>CMa</b>	Chris Marchant	unknown	<b>LP</b>	Leigh Palmer	Eastbourne BC / Lewes DC
<b>CMo</b>	Chris Moore	Homes England	<b>MB</b>	Mark Bewsey	DHA Planning
<b>CMr</b>	Chris Moore	Bellway Homes	<b>MD</b>	Mark Davis	MHCLG
<b>DE</b>	Dave Evans	East Sussex CC	<b>NF</b>	Nick Fenton	Nick Fenton Associates
<b>DF</b>	David Forbes	MHCLG	<b>PP</b>	Peter Phillips	Highways England
<b>DM</b>	David Martin	Stiles Harold Williams Partnership	<b>PT</b>	Paul Thomas	Development Land Services Ltd / SELEP
<b>DS</b>	Dave Shepherd	Clarion Housing Group	<b>SM</b>	Sarah Mayers	Rentplus
<b>EE</b>	Eleanor Evans	Hastings BC	<b>SR</b>	Stacey Robins	Wealden DC
<b>EP</b>	Erica Peck	Rydon Homes	<b>TH</b>	Tim Hickling	Rother DC / ES Planning Officers Group
<b>ES</b>	Edward Sheath	East Sussex CC	<b>VG</b>	Vera Gajic	East Sussex CC
<b>IG</b>	Isabel Garden	Wealden DC			

Apologies

<b>JMa</b>	Jon Maskell	Environment Agency	<b>MO</b>	Matthew Oliver	Vistry Homes (formerly Bovis Homes)
<b>JO</b>	Jane Owen	MHCLG			

**Any papers or presentations used at this meeting can be viewed on the following page of the ESCC website:**  
[www.eastsussex.gov.uk/business/eastsussex/selep/des/des201209](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/business/eastsussex/selep/des/des201209)

**1. Welcome and introductions**

1.1. **JB** welcomed the group and delivered the apologies. Round table introductions were made.

**2. Review of previous minutes, 20 Oct 2020**

2.1. **JB** ran through the actions of the previous DES meeting noting that all had been completed. The minutes were approved by the group as an accurate record of the meeting.

**3. EU Exit Transition**

3.1. DES members discussed the impacts and implications of the EU Exit Transition, led by **MD** and **DF** from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and **JS** from the Home Builders Federation (HBF). The following key points were raised:

- We have a high number of European construction workers living in the UK who will need to apply for settled status through the EU Settlement Scheme. More than 4 million people have already applied – it’s not too late as the scheme is open until 30 Jun 2021.
- A continuing issue for the industry/sector is skills, so it’s an area that needs to work well in terms of employing skilled EU workers. The points-based immigration system will include a route for both EU and non-EU skilled workers (qualified to A-level equivalent and above).
- Concerns have been raised about whether some tradespeople, e.g. bricklayers, will be able to score highly enough in the points-based immigration system.
- Builders merchants and manufacturers nationally seem to be making sure they have supplies, but there could be issues in other areas – timber, white goods, roof tiles – the supply of which may be vulnerable and exacerbated by Brexit.
- Stats suggest that new-starts are down by around 40% to 50% year-on-year, so even with building up stocks, this lack of activity could be masking existing supply chain issues, i.e. unknown problems lurking out of sight.
- Whilst we should keep an eye on potential materials/product shortages, let’s not get too hung up on supply and demand, just be aware that there will be some inevitable delays.

- Whether or not we have a Deal, many of the implications will be the same regardless, meaning we can all take some steps now to prepare in advance (such as trying to ensure existing construction projects can complete).
- Supply chain problems are a short-term issue, but our biggest long-term concern is skills. The UK education and training system is not producing enough people for the industry – there are simply not enough skilled trades out there. The longevity of some of these issues is unknown, so the UK system really needs to step up. We need a collective effort to improve our domestic skills base.
- Local authorities are trying to drive developments forward but the Housing Development Test is an important concern as some authorities are failing; Government need to be made aware of this disconnect.

3.2. **JS** advised that he's got some useful slides summarising the EU Settlement Scheme, employing migrant workers, the points-based immigration system etc, which he agreed to share.

*[Action: JS to forward his EU Exit summary slides to DE for circulation to the group]*

#### **4. Highways England**

4.1. **PP** and **KBo** delivered a presentation on the roles and responsibilities of Highways England, which looks after the Strategic Route Network (SRN), including the A21, A27, A23 and A259. The Route Sponsor Team 'owns' the network and identifies/promotes future improvements, liaising with all stakeholders including ports, airports and residents; the team also engages with SELEP and TfSE on their strategies so they can help with development. The Spatial Planning Team helps facilitate growth and development while safeguarding the safety, reliability and operation of the SRN.

4.2. **PP** and **KBo** also ran through their engagement with Local Plans and highlighted some of the key projects in the Road Investment Strategy (RIS), such as the A21 Route Safety Treatment and the A27 East of Lewes project (which is a RIS-3, 2025-30 pipeline project).

*[Action: PP to forward his Highways England presentation to DE for circulation to the group]*

#### **5. Economy Recovery Plan**

5.1. **CBe** advised that there is little to report in terms of an update as the previous DES meeting was only a few weeks ago, but he did note that there are a couple of actions in Mission 4 where gathering additional evidence would help support recovery. As the meeting was running over, he agreed to circulate his questions electronically.

*[Action: CBe to share his questions on the Economy Recovery Plan with DE for circulation to the group; DES members to respond directly to CBe]*

#### **6. MHCLG / Homes England engagement**

6.1. **BH** advised that the monthly conversations with MHCLG are continuing. Our main contact at MHCLG, *Jane Owen*, will also be joining our DES meetings from now on.

6.2. As a follow-up to our most recent letter to the Secretary of State, sent jointly from the East Sussex, Essex and Kent developer groups focusing on issues of confidence, the Chairs of the three developer groups are setting up a meeting with *Christopher Pincher MP* (Minister for Housing). Meetings are also being arranged with council portfolio holders and the Chair and CEO of SELEP.

6.3. Future conversations with MHCLG will focus on Brexit issues, so DES members are encouraged to pass on any specific concerns to be raised.

*[Action: DES members to send any specific concerns to be raised with MHCLG, particularly around Brexit issues, to BH and JB]*

6.4. **CMo** reported that Homes England has seen construction activity in Sussex and Kent improve significantly in the past couple of months, and it's now at around 80% productivity onsite. However, he cautioned that it may drop again in the early part of 2021 after the Brexit fallout is finally realised and the stamp duty holiday ends in Mar 2021.

6.5. **CMo** also advised that Homes England is changing its procurement process in relation to SMEs to provide a more flexible approach with a dynamic new purchasing system, and is also working with MHCLG on the 'First Homes' scheme.

## 7. AOB

7.1. **JB** advised that whilst the annual Leaders Dinner obviously won't be able to take place this year, we will instead hold a 'Conversation with the Leaders' event on 19 Jan 2021. **VG** will circulate invitations to DES Full Members later this week.

*[Action: VG to circulate invitations to the Conversation with the Leaders event to DES Full Members]*

7.2. **BH** highlighted another event also taking place on 19 Jan 2021 (earlier in the day), a seminar looking at kickstarting SME housing recovery, for which **DE** has already circulated an invitation. DES members are encouraged to attend, and can register via this [Eventbrite link](#).

7.3. **JB** asked the group to consider how often DES meetings should take place moving forward, as **DE** will be drawing up the 2021 meeting schedule in the new year. During the pandemic we've held shorter virtual meetings more frequently, roughly every six weeks rather than quarterly, and this has worked very well. The group agreed that this should continue for the foreseeable, to be reviewed again if/when we're able to meet again in person later in the year.

*[Action: DE to draft the 2021 DES meeting schedule, with virtual meetings to be held roughly every six weeks rather than quarterly]*

### Summary of actions:

3.2 **JS** to forward his EU Exit summary slides to **DE** for circulation to the group.

4.2 **PP** to forward his Highways England presentation to **DE** for circulation to the group.

5.1 **CBe** to share his questions on the Economy Recovery Plan with **DE** for circulation to the group; DES members to respond directly to **CBe**.

6.3 DES members to send any specific concerns to be raised with MHCLG, particularly around Brexit issues, to **BH** and **JB**.

7.1 **VG** to circulate invitations to the Conversation with the Leaders event to DES Full Members.

7.3 **DE** to draft the 2021 DES meeting schedule, with virtual meetings to be held roughly every six weeks rather than quarterly.