# Wivelsfield Parish Council Consultation Response Planning Application at Land South of Green Road, Wivelsfield Green.

Planning application LW/24/0820.

**March 2025**

**Wivelsfield Parish Council**

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# 1. Introduction

1.1. These representations provide a response, prepared by Troy Planning + Design (Chartered Town Planners) on behalf of Wivelsfield Parish Council (WPC), to the following planning application being considered by Lewes District Council (LDC):

- **LW/24/0820** Outline application for the erection of up to 150 dwellings, with associated works, parking, landscaping, publicly accessible open space, land for education or community use, with access from Green Road and Eastern Road. All matters are reserved (appearance, layout and landscaping) except for the principle of development and the access.

1.2. This application relates to the land south of Green Road and east of Eastern Road, a site that forms part of a Local Green Space designation in the Wivelsfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan (WPNP). The southernmost part of the application site also falls within Westmeston Parish. The site in question is not allocated for development in the Development Plan, since the WPNP directs development within the settlement boundaries, also encouraging the use of previously developed land and of land that currently detracts from the appearance of the settlement. The Ditchling Streat and Westmeston Neighbourhood Development Plan (DSWNDP) also focuses the development strategy in Ditchling only, as the main and most-sustainable location of the Neighbourhood Area. Both Neighbourhood Plans allocated land for housing and the approach followed included the reuse of previously developed land and small infill sites within the settlement boundary. WPC has particular interest in ensuring that development within the Parish is planned and results from a plan-led process, in order to achieve the best outcome possible, for the benefit of current and future residents in Wivelsfield.

1.3. WPC would like to reiterate its support to a plan-led approach and the provision of housing, infrastructure and facilities that meet the needs of the local community. Notwithstanding this, the Parish Council has concerns with the fundamental deviation of the proposal from the Development Plan and would like to contribute to a positive discussion about the future of the village and Parish. In order to achieve this, WPC has produced these representations in which we highlight some of the key policy and local community considerations and concerns that we have with the current proposals. WPC hopes that the scheme is not supported by the Local Planning Authority (LPA). Instead, the site should be considered – as is happening – within the Land Availability Assessment (LAA), under the Local Plan process. The most recent version of the LAA (December 2024) concluded that sites 28WV and 31WV are not deliverable or developable, only seeing potential for development of approximately 47 homes within site 29WV, which corresponds to field E, as shown in Figure 12 in these representations. Even then, this site is still only assessed as being *potentially* deliverable and developable and is marked amber, rather than green.

1.4. We offer LDC our involvement in the application process should it wish to involve us or if any clarifications are required.

## 2. Policy framework and planning history

2.1. The policy framework for the site is established in the following plans that form the Development Plan in the area:

- Wivelsfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan (2016) (revised in 2021).
- Ditchling Streat and Westmeston Neighbourhood Development Plan (2018)
- Lewes District Local Plan Part 2 – Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (2020)
- Lewes District Local Plan Part 1 – Joint Core Strategy 2010 – 2030 (2016)

2.2. The relevant policies in the **Wivelsfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan** (WPNP) are:

- Policy 1: A Spatial Plan for the Parish
- Policy 2: Housing Site Allocations
- Policy 3: Education
- Policy 4: Community Facilities
- Policy 5: Design
- Policy 6: Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity
- Policy 7: Local Green Spaces

2.3. The following policies of the **Ditchling Streat and Westmeston Neighbourhood Development Plan** (DSWNDP) are relevant:

- DS 1: Development Strategy
- HSG 1: Set out and apply acceptance criteria to housing applications
- HSG 2: Site density and layout
- HSG 5: Ensure infrastructure capacity
- TRANS 1: Off-street car parking
- TRANS 2: Transport infrastructure improvements associated with new housing development
- CONS 2: Set standards for design of new development
- CONS 6: Conserve landscape and important views
- CONS 7: Protect important gaps between settlements
- CONS 8: Preserve dark night skies
- CONS 9: Protect and enhance habitats and biodiversity

- CONS 12: Safeguard and enhance green infrastructure
- CONS 13: Protect and enhance links to the countryside

2.4. The following **Lewes District Local Plan Part 2** policies are relevant:

- DM1: Planning Boundary – development will be permitted within the planning boundary. Outside of boundaries, development will only be permitted where the need for a countryside location can be demonstrated
- DM14: Multifunctional Green Infrastructure
- DM15: Provision for Outdoor Playing Space
- DM16: Children's Play Space in New Housing Development
- DM19: Protection of Agricultural Land
- DM20: Pollution Management
- DM21: Land Contamination
- DM22: Water Resources and Water Quality
- DM23: Noise
- DM24: Protection of Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- DM25: Design
- DM26: Refuse and Recycling
- DM27: Landscape Design
- DM29: Garages and other buildings ancillary to existing dwellings
- DM30: Backland Development
- DM33: Heritage Assets
- DM34: Areas of Established Character
- DM35: Footpath, Cycle and Bridleway Network

2.5. The following **Lewes District Local Plan Part 1 – Joint Core Strategy (JCS)** policies are relevant:

- Spatial Policy 1: Provision of Housing and Employment Land
- Spatial Policy 2: Distribution of Housing
- Core Policy 1: Affordable Housing
- Core Policy 2: Housing Type, Mix and Density
- Core Policy 7: Infrastructure
- Core Policy 8: Green Infrastructure
- Core Policy 10: Natural Environment and Landscape

- Core Policy 11: Built and Historic Environment & Design
- Core Policy 12: Flood Risk, Coastal Erosion and Drainage
- Core Policy 13: Sustainable Travel

2.6. Pre-application advice (ref. **PREAPP/23/0158**) was given by LDC to the Applicant in May 2024 for a development proposal of 170 dwellings, landscaping, open space, and land for either school expansion or community use, with potential points of access. The proposal involved the same parcel of land in question, at the land South of Green Road and east of Eastern Road.

2.7. The following points summarise the pre-application advice letter sent by LDC to the Applicant:

- LDC considered that there is potential for development of the site, at least on part of it, due the shortfall in housing supply in Lewes District.
- LDC raised significant concerns with regards to the impact of the development on local landscape character, including the village's established settlement pattern and the local green space designation.
- LDC considered the site to be in a relatively sustainable location, whilst acknowledging its limitations and reliance on car use.
- Housing mix should include 40% affordable homes, and a mix informed by local demand, small units (1-2 beds) in particular.
- The Applicant should carry out a comprehensive engagement exercise with the affected parishes.
- Layout design should provide a high-quality living environment, prioritising pedestrians over cars. An overarching masterplan including densities and field boundary retention, with a mix of character areas, should be agreed at outline stage. The masterplan should be guided by national design guidance.
- In terms of landscape, the LPA raised concerns about the loss of the open nature of the local green space as a result of the new access, it required appropriate transitions to ancient woodland, as well as to retain the landscape gap between the east and west sections of the village. The LPA also alerted the Applicant to the impact of the proposed development's depth on the characteristic linear pattern of the west of the village.
- It was requested that the Applicant: demonstrate that the development would not entail the loss of high-quality agricultural land, work with existing green infrastructure (GI) features, avoiding habitat fragmentation, and demonstrate a biodiversity net gain of 10%.
- The LPA requested the Applicant to assess heritage assets and identified a potential impact on the setting of Jenners (Grade II Listed Building) should the road need widening.

- A children's play space would be required on site and contributions towards the improvement of the recreation ground would be required.
- A non-motorised access on Eastern Road would be supported, whilst the main vehicular access on Green Road would need to be designed to avoid impacts on character and amenity, and to users of the existing bridleway. It was also required to incorporate suitable parking and turning areas, avoiding the development being dominated by cars, and encouraging sustainable modes of transport.

2.8. WPC was not consulted at the pre-application stage, and the advice letter was only made public once the outline application was validated at the request of WPC.

2.9. With the above background in mind, WPC would like to highlight a number of matters and concerns regarding these development proposals.

## 3. Principle of development

3.1. The site (Land South of Green Road /east of Eastern Road) is entirely within the countryside, outside of any settlement/planning boundary, as defined in policies DM1 and DM2 of the Lewes Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2). The site is also not allocated for residential development in the two applicable neighbourhood plans. Therefore, the Development Plan is not supportive of residential development in this location and reduces the opportunities for housing to those that demonstrably require a countryside location, such as dwellings for agricultural and rural workers.

3.2. The purpose of the planning (settlement) boundaries in policy DM1 (LPP2) is to positively focus growth on sustainable settlements, reduce the need to travel and protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Our representations explain how the proposed development fails to meet the policy requirements of DM1, and conflicts with its purpose.

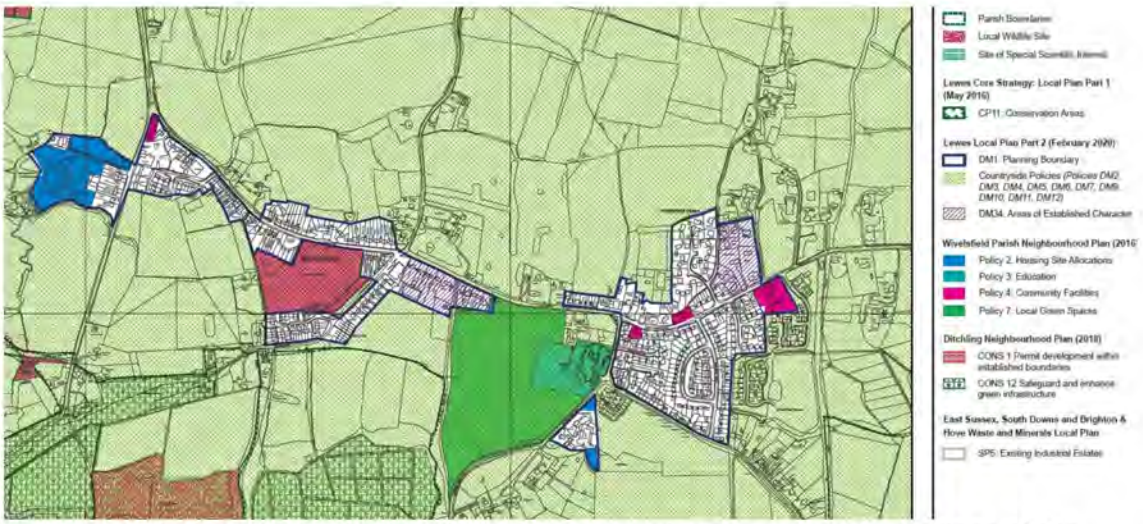



*Figure 1: Policies Map of Wivelsfield Green showing the two main sections of the settlement/planning boundary (policy DM1).*

3.3. Furthermore, the emerging Lewes District Local Plan, under (Regulation 18) has already proposed a list of 'early site allocation proposals' including 23 sites for residential development, none of which are located in Wivelsfield Green. The rationale for this is explained later in these representations, however, it provides a useful and important indication of how the spatial and development strategy is evolving in the District, directing development to more sustainable locations, which definitely does not include Wivelsfield Parish. Therefore, neither the adopted Development Plan nor the emerging plan is supportive of the proposed development in this location.

**The presumption in favour of sustainable development**

3.4. LDC states in the pre-application advice letter issued in May 2024 that, given the LPA's inability to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, decisions on planning applications will have to be made in accordance with paragraph 11 of the NPPF, which relates to the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

3.5. For planning applications such as this one, according to the NPPF, the presumption in favour of sustainable development entails granting planning permission for new development in the cases when the LPA cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, unless:

- There is a strong reason for refusal based on the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance: habitats sites, a SSSI, a Green Belt, a Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park, a Heritage Coast, irreplaceable habitats, designated heritage assets and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change; or,
- any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

3.6. It is also worth highlighting that the NPPF (paragraph 12) establishes limits to the presumption in favour of sustainable development:

> "*The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision-making. Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not usually be granted.*"

3.7. The proposed development is contrary to the Development Plan and as we will discuss later in these representations, the presumption in favour of sustainable development in paragraph 11 c) of the NPPF would entail refusing this planning application due.

3.8. The Applicant claims in the Planning Statement that paragraph 11 d) of the NPPF applies and it would warrant supporting the principle of development in this

location. The test covered in NPPF paragraph 11 d) is discussed in the sections below.

The Applicant also suggests that the most important policies of the Development Plan are out of date, including the settlement planning boundary policies. However, this is not correct, as the spatial strategy of the Development Plan may be out of date due to the inability of LDC to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, but the spatial strategy, insofar as it is designed to direct development to sustainable locations and to avoid harm to the countryside, remains valid and relevant.

Therefore, WPC does not agree with the Applicant that policies DM1 (LPP2), 1 (WPNP) and DS1 (DSWNDP) are outdated. Spatial Policy 1 of the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) may be challenged by the Applicant as it makes provision for housing land, but the other spatial policies in the Development Plan only set out a strategy (to be complied with by all developments) to direct where development should be focused, primarily within settlement boundaries (planning boundaries). Even in the event of the Development Plan being out-of-date and engaging the presumption in favour of sustainable development, development could and should be focused to the more appropriate locations in the District, which is what policies M1 (LPP2), 1 (WPNP) and DS1 (DSWNDP) aim to do.

3.9. The Applicant has stated that there are no NPPF footnote 7 constraints and therefore the scheme should be determined favourably under the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Notwithstanding this, WPC is concerned with the location of part of the development within a designated Local Green Space (LGS), which is a protection referred to in footnote 7 of paragraph 11 of the NPP, which is sufficient justification, according to the NPPF, to disengage the tilted balance.

3.10. As explained in the relevant sections later in these representations, WPC is concerned that the proposed development would lead to adverse impacts on the Local Green Space designated in the WPNP. This would mean the development would fail to comply with paragraph 11 of the NPPF requirements and would provide **a sufficiently strong reason to refuse the development.** An assessment is provided in the Local Green Space section of these representations.

3.11. In the above scenario, the Development Plan provides a clear framework for growth within settlement boundaries. In the case of exceptional development outside boundaries, engaging the presumption in favour of sustainable development (p.11 NPPF), LDC produced the Policy Statement for Housing Delivery (March 2020) which is also relevant in the assessment of this planning application.

**Interim Policy Statement for Housing Delivery**

3.12. LDC produced the Interim Policy Statement for Housing Delivery (March 2020), in an effort to direct development outside of policy boundaries (DM1) in the countryside to areas where the harms caused would be lower and the location is most sustainable. Whilst the statement is guidance and not policy, it carries weight

in the decision taking and WPC has reviewed the criteria and provided comments on how the site performs against each criterion.

| Criteria | Assessment |
|---|---|
| The site boundary is contiguous with an adopted settlement planning boundary, as defined on the Local Plan Policies Map. | It is accepted that the application site is contiguous with a settlement/planning boundary (west section of the settlement boundary). |
| The scale of development is appropriate to the size, character and role of the adjacent settlement, having regard to the settlement hierarchy. | The scale of the development (Application site: 21ha, development area: 7ha) is disproportionate to the size of Wivelsfield Green (approx. 35ha) and the west section of the settlement (14ha). It constitutes a departure from the established linear settlement pattern in the western part of the settlement, which is in a low tier in the settlement hierarchy, with limited services, facilities and sustainable transport.<br><br>The development will also contribute to Wivelsfield Green with 150 additional homes, representing a 12% increase in dwellings since 2023, and a 20% increase since 2011, which is a significant increase not appropriate to the scale of the settlement. |
| The proposed development will provide safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle access to key community facilities and services. | The development provides cycle and pedestrian access, but it is not convenient nor safe to use as the location and design of the scheme promote car use instead. |
| The proposed development, individually or cumulatively, will not result in the actual or perceived coalescence of settlements. | The development, on its own, will contribute to the physical and perceived coalescence of the west and east parts of the settlement, which are separated by a countryside gap. The gap and the open space are important to the local community, as they were designated in the WPNP, with the support of 96% of the local community at referendum. The housing development will narrow the existing gap and the proposed development within the LGS will also suburbanise and |

| | |
|---|---|
| | deteriorate this part of the gap between settlement boundaries. |
| Within the setting of the South Downs National Park (SDNP), an assessment is undertaken to demonstrate that the proposed development will conserve the special qualities of the SDNP. | N/A |
| An ecological impact assessment is undertaken and appropriate measures identified and implemented accordingly to mitigate any potential adverse impacts of the development on biodiversity and secure biodiversity net gain. | Regardless of the submitted ecological impact assessment and biodiversity net gain proposed, the development will result in habitat fragmentation (hedgerows mainly). |
| The proposed development will make the best and most efficient use of the land, whilst responding sympathetically to the existing character and distinctiveness of the adjoining settlement and surrounding rural area. | The proposal does not constitute the best and most efficient use of land. It is a low-density suburban scheme of 150 dwellings. Furthermore, it does not respond sympathetically to character and distinctiveness due to its significant departure from the characteristic pattern of the settlement and the erosion of the existing open rural land gap between settlements. |
| It can be demonstrated that the proposed development is deliverable and viable, having regard to the provision of necessary on-site infrastructure, including affordable housing, green infrastructure and other requirements. | The Interim Policy Statement for Housing Delivery produced by LDC says that applications are expected to be accompanied by evidence of deliverability at the time they are submitted, but no such evidence has been provided. |

3.13. WPC is of the view that **the proposed development fails to comply with the guidance contained in the Interim Policy Statement for Housing Delivery (2020)**. The development is of a scale that is not appropriate to the size, character and role of Wivelsfield, also not adhering to the settlement hierarchy. It also contributes to the coalescence of settlements and car usage rather than active travel and public transport, due to its location. Finally, it is also worth highlighting that it negatively affects the local character and settlement pattern and replaces it with 'anywhere' suburban development that fails to make an efficient use of land and fails to respond sympathetically to its context. Consequently, WPC considers that the

development does not comply with the Interim Policy Statement for Housing Delivery.

3.14. The assessment table above is further explained and developed later in these representations, in each topic section.

**Conclusion**

3.15. WPC is of the view that the proposed development is contrary to the adopted Development Plan and spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy in the emerging Lewes District Local Plan. It cannot be supported when assessing it in light of paragraph 11 of the NPPF (presumption in favour of sustainable development) due to development within the LGS that warrants refusing the application. The development is also found to conflict with the Interim Policy Statement for Housing Delivery. Consequently, the development of 150 new homes and associated works, should not be supported in principle.

3.16. We are also concerned that the proposed development would lead to a terrible precedent against Neighbourhood Plan making and would invalidate the powers given by the Localism Act and the NPPF to local communities (paragraphs 106 and 107) to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to the community. The designation of the land South of Green Road as LGS was found sound by the WPNP examiner and it was supported by the local community at referendum. However, this development proposal, if allowed, would jeopardise this democratic plan-led process.

3.17. In the event that LDC disagrees with WPC's view on the principle of development, WPC has also assessed other aspects of the proposed development and highlights issues and makes recommendations to the LPA as to why the application should be refused.

# 4. Sustainability and transport

4.1. WPC objects to the proposed residential development due to the site being in an unsustainable location, as Wivelsfield is not sufficiently equipped with facilities, services, employment or public transport required to enable sustainable living. This is the reason why the Development Plan sets out a spatial strategy for development, which focuses development to more sustainable locations in the District.

4.2. The purpose of policy DM1 (LPP2) is "*to positively focus growth on sustainable settlements, reduce the need to travel, and protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, in accordance with the spatial strategy set out in the Local Plan Part 1*". Unfortunately, the proposed scheme would add growth to an unsustainable settlement, as it will be discussed in the following paragraphs. It would also fail to reduce car travel, but would achieve the opposite, which is a new community that would completely rely on private car use. Finally, it would also affect the character and beauty of the countryside with its suburbanisation and loss of agricultural land, rural open gap and open space between settlement boundaries.

**Settlement Hierarchy**

4.3. The JCS and the Interim Policy Statement for Housing Delivery classify Wivelsfield Green as a 'Service Village', which is in the fifth tier in the settlement hierarchy and is defined as "*villages that have a basic level of services and facilities, public transport provision (possibly not frequent) and limited employment opportunities. Residents can have some of their day-to-day needs met in such locations, although higher order settlements need to be accessed to enable this to be fully achieved*". This highlights how low the village scores in comparison to other settlements in the District, due to the limited public transport and few basic facilities available.

4.4. The evidence from LDC regarding settlement hierarchy and services was reviewed and produced in July 2023 including a Settlement Hierarchy Review and Settlement Services Review in support of the emerging Lewes District Local Plan. Some of the conclusions from the most up-to-date evidence are:

- Wivelsfield Green remains in the Service Village tier.
- The definition of the Service Village is revised down, and no scoring is required as part of the test.
- The score of key services/facilities has not changed.
- Wivelsfield Green is the lowest-scoring settlement in the Service Village tier.
- The bus service in Wivelsfield Green has been revised down from frequent to infrequent bus service.
- Wivelsfield Green scores the same points or similar as settlements in a lower tier (Local Village), evidencing how few services and facilities are available to residents.
- There is no bus service from Wivelsfield Green to the nearest train station, called Wivelsfield, but actually located in Worlds End, a northern neighbourhood of Burgess Hill.

4.5. A level of growth in Service Villages should help sustain local services and may support or encourage the development of new services according to the Rural Settlement Study (2012) but whilst the population and number of dwellings have been growing in recent years, and new planning permissions have been granted for further housing, community facilities and services have not grown accordingly. A nursery opened in 2023 in Wivelsfield Green, but this simply replaced the service offered by Wivelsfield Green Playgroup which had been running since the 1970s and closed during Covid. At one stage, a few years ago, a second nursery facility also operated out of Wivelsfield Church Hall, so the opening of the nursery at Wivelsfield Primary School does not represent an increase in services as compared with previously. Bus services have been reduced, impeding access to important services, facilities and employment areas away from the village and larger settlements, where the majority of services and jobs are located. No other services, facilities or job opportunities have been incorporated into the village. Indeed employment

opportunities have reduced in recent years, with the closure of Travis Perkins, the hairdresser's, Beer Piper Company and Baldocks garage, workshops and showroom, (the latter being replaced by a more modest filling station and shop).

4.6. Served only by minor roads and a B road, and in the absence of a sufficiently reliable and frequent bus service or active travel infrastructure, there is limited potential to travel by walking/cycling or public transport in comparison to larger tier settlements (such as Burgess Hill or Haywards Heath).

4.7. In that regard, the Development Plan does not focus growth to Service Villages, and only refers to levels of housing growth of between 30 to 100 homes over the plan period that would be appropriate for Service Villages. These numbers are considered appropriate based on service provision at the time of the adoption of the JCS in 2016. However, the JCS acknowledges that no detailed assessment was undertaken on the opportunities and constraints to development in Wivelsfield Green specifically. The referred level of growth is theoretical, and it may not be deliverable in certain settlements.

4.8. The JCS identified a minimum growth of 30 units for Wivelsfield Parish (Spatial Policy 2), sites for which could be identified via Neighbourhood Development Plans. The WPNP then allocated a number of sites for residential development adding a total of 34 new homes. The table below outlines the allocations and their status.

| NDP site allocation | Units | Status |
|---|---|---|
| Land at Springfield Industrial Site, West of B2112 | Approximately 30 dwellings | Planning permission granted for 30 new dwellings in September 2023. Ref. LW/21/0867. |
| The First Site on Land at Hundred Acre Lane | Approximately 2 dwellings | Planning permission granted for 2 dwellings in 2018. Ref. LW/18/0437 (now built). |
| The Second Site on Land at Hundred Acre Lane | Approximately 2 dwellings | Application for 2 dwellings withdrawn in 2021. Ref. LW/21/0192<br>Application for 1 dwelling pending decision. Ref. LW/22/0421 |
| **Total (of 30 units JCS requirement)** | **Approximately 34 dwellings allocated in the WPNP** | **32 dwellings granted permission** |

*Figure 2: Table showing the status of the three WPNP allocations.*

4.9. In addition to the allocated sites in the WPNP, which have progressed very well since the NDP was made in 2016, there have been several recent planning permissions that added significant unplanned new homes to Wivelsfield Green (and

the wider Parish). **Appendix 1** outlines all relevant planning permissions granted since the start of the plan period, which illustrates the disproportionate increase of unplanned residential development in Wivelsfield Green.

4.10. The proposed development would add an additional 150 new dwellings to the village despite the 298 homes that have already been permitted during the plan period. This new 150-home development would be in addition to the 32 dwellings granted permission in the WPNP, entailing a provision of homes of 480 units where the JCS planned for only 30 units. Proportionately this would mean a housing provision of 1600% of the initially planned increase in new homes expected over the plan period of the WPNP and JCS.

4.11. This amount of unplanned development is clearly disproportionate and unsustainable for a settlement that is located low in the settlement hierarchy and scores low in terms of facilities, services, jobs available and distance (and access) to higher-tier settlements. WPC considers that a degree of growth may help sustain and support local services in Wivelsfield Parish, however, this has not been the case regardless of the new unprecedented and unplanned increase in development since the WPNP was made. In that regard, the available bus service has been reduced and has become less reliable to access services, facilities and jobs elsewhere, increasing the reliance on private cars instead.

*Settlement Hierarchy Review 2025 and emerging Lewes District Local Plan*

4.12. The emerging Lewes Local Plan and its supporting evidence are relevant to this planning application and Wivelsfield Green's assessment of sustainability. The 'Settlement Hierarchy Review' dated January 2025 provides a useful picture of the sustainability of Wivelsfield Green. The main conclusion from the report is that Wivelsfield Green has to be moved down in the settlement hierarchy in light of the lack of accessibility of the settlement in terms of sustainable transport connectivity, being one of the lowest-scoring settlements in terms of transport.

| | Category | Settlement | Services Score | Bus | Train | Active Travel | Travel Multiplier | Total Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tier 1 | District Centre | Seaford | 180 | 2 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.67 | 300 |
| | | Newhaven | 180 | 2 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.67 | 300 |
| Tier 2 | Service Centre | Peacehaven & Telscombe | 160 | 2 | 0.5 | 1.5 | 1.33 | 213 |
| | | Ringmer | 135 | 2 | 0.5 | 1.5 | 1.33 | 180 |
| Tier 3 | Service Village | Plumpton Green | 90 | 1 | 1.5 | 0.5 | 1.00 | 90 |
| | | Newick | 100 | 1 | 0.5 | 1 | 0.83 | 83 |
| Tier 4 | Village | North Chailey | 65 | 1 | 0.5 | 1 | 0.83 | 54 |
| | | Barcombe Cross | 70 | 1 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.67 | 47 |
| | | Wivelsfield Green | 70 | 1 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.67 | 47 |
| | | South Heighton | 45 | 1 | 0.5 | 1.5 | 1.00 | 45 |
| | | South Chailey | 55 | 1 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.67 | 37 |
| | | Cooksbridge | 25 | 1 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.33 | 33 |
| | | Chailey Green | 35 | 1 | 0.5 | 1 | 0.83 | 29 |
| | | Broyle Side | 20 | 2 | 0.5 | 1.5 | 1.33 | 27 |
| Tier 5 | Hamlet | Barcombe | 10 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.50 | 5 |
| | | Wivelsfield | 10 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.50 | 5 |

*Figure 3: Extract from the Settlement Hierarchy Review Update (January 2025)*

4.13. The emerging Lewes District Local Plan, (Regulation 18), has policies based on the January 2025 settlement hierarchy review. The emerging plan identifies in Draft

Strategic Policy SDS3 (Settlement Hierarchy) that Wivelsfield Green should be located in tier four of five (Village) due to the very few facilities and services and poor levels of accessibility to higher order settlements and sustainable transport options. It also confirms that this village has insufficient employment opportunities.

4.14. Appendix 1 of the Settlement Hierarchy Review 2025 shows the scoring in terms of services and Wivelsfield Green does not score well as it is a settlement where there are none of the services listed below. It should be noted that the report does not identify other important uses, services and facilities that would normally be expected in a settlement, such as garages, leisure and retail areas, etc.

- Secondary school
- Other educational facility
- GP surgery/Chemist
- Dentist
- Supermarket
- Specialist food retailer
- Employment area
- Library
- Community hall

4.15. In consideration of the emerging Lewes District Local Plan supporting evidence and the draft settlement hierarchy policy, WPC considers that it is demonstrated that Wivelsfield Green scores very low in terms of its order in the settlement hierarchy due to its poor accessibility to services and sustainable transport. The evidence also suggests that the services have worsened since the WPNP was made and that there has been an extreme increase of unplanned residential development in Wivelsfield Green which has not been accompanied by the necessary infrastructure to sustain and improve services. Furthermore, in the absence of sufficient services, facilities and sustainable transport in the village, residents increasingly depend on private car use. This is alarming, especially considering that on average, 95% of households in the area have one or more cars (whereas in England is 76%) and the tendency of car ownership keeps rising, according to the latest Census data.

4.16. The proposed development of 150 new homes in the village would only exacerbate the current poor situation of the village and would worsen the sustainability of the local community as it continues with an unsustainable approach of new development in an inaccessible location without contributing towards sustainable transport use, thus cementing a car-dependency in the community.

| Settlement category (Tier) | Functions | Settlements |
|---|---|---|
| Tier 1 - District Centre | Accessible settlements by road and public transport containing a range of shops, employment opportunities and facilities including a secondary school. Such settlements are not reliant upon other centres to meet day to day needs, but they require support from nearby larger towns and cities to meet other needs of their residents. | Seaford, Newhaven |
| Tier 2 - Service Centre | Sustainable locations (with either a frequent bus or rail service) with a number of key services and facilities that meet many day-to-day needs of their residents and those from the wider rural hinterland. Some employment opportunities are available. | Peacehaven & Telscombe<br>Ringmer |
| Tier 3 - Service Village | Villages that have a basic level of services and facilities, public transport provision (not necessarily frequent) and limited employment opportunities. Residents can have some of their day-to-day needs met in such locations, although higher order settlements need to be accessed to enable this to be fully achieved. | Plumpton Green, Newick |
| Tier 4 - Village | Villages that have very few facilities and services and have poor levels of accessibility to higher order settlements. Few, if any, employment opportunities are available. | Broyle Side, Cooksbridge, Chailey North, South Heighton, Barcombe Cross, Chailey Green, Wivelsfield Green, South Chailey |
| Tier 5 - Hamlet | Settlements that generally have a population of less than 100, have a historic core (generally with a church), but are generally lacking social infrastructure and ease of accessibility to higher order settlements. | Barcombe, Wivelsfield |

*Figure 4: Extract from the emerging Lewes District Local Plan: Draft Strategic Policy SDS3 (Settlement Hierarchy)*

## Transport

*Transport Assessment*

4.17. The Transport Assessment submitted with the application states that the development would benefit from services and facilities within a walking neighbourhood, referring to the 'Manual for Streets' definition of walking neighbourhoods, where facilities are within a 10-minute walk (or up to 800 metres) with comfortable access by foot. The list below outlines the destinations that are not available within a 10-minute walking distance from the site.

- Secondary education, and higher and further education facilities.
- Community hall, or community centre
- Place of worship
- GP surgery, chemist, dentist, hospital (no medical service)*
- Train station, cycling route/lane
- Employment areas
- Leisure and retail areas

*It is worth noting that the only GP surgeries that will now register patients from Wivelsfield are not accessible by any means of public transport from Wivelsfield (e.g. Newick Surgery).

4.18. The adopted Development Plan, the emerging Lewes District Local Plan and its supporting evidence (Settlement Hierarchy Review 2025) and the submitted Transport Assessment confirm that only some of the daily activities would be able

to be met locally. Moreover, the necessary trips for all other activities would not be achieved sustainably and private cars would be the main and almost only travel option available to future residents of the proposed development.

4.19. WPC has assessed the walking and cycling options available in the village and we have concluded that walking is not a suitable option for accessing many services and that the proposed walking infrastructure improvements as part of this development are not sufficient nor adequate.

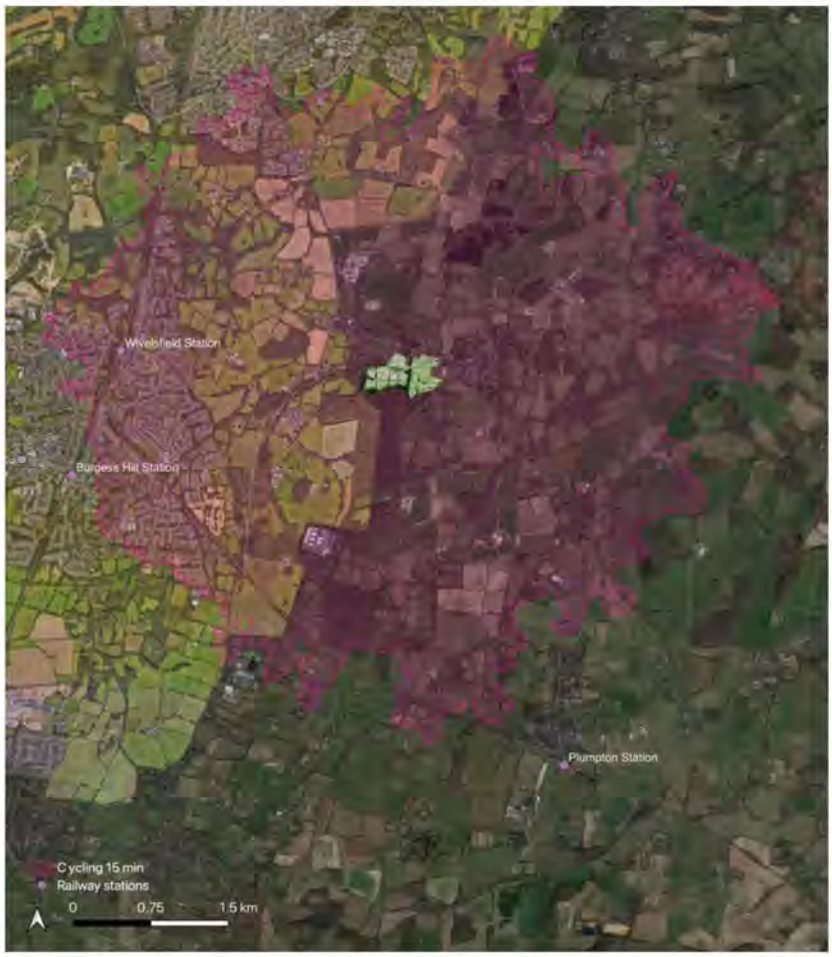



*Figure 5: Isochrone 15-minute cycling map from the application site.*

4.20. In terms of cycling, the above isochrone map illustrates that the only area accessible by bicycle, is the edge of Burgess Hill and Wivelsfield Train Station. There are however no significant services and employment areas available within 15 minutes by cycling regardless.

4.21. The Transport Assessment claims that the Wivelsfield Train Station (which is not in Wivelsfield but in Burgess Hill) is accessible by cycling within less than 15 minutes. Unfortunately, the Transport Assessment does not go far enough in assessing in detail the feasibility of the route to the station to potential users. This route is not convenient nor safe to cyclists and its theoretical less-than-15 minute-cycle distance should not be used as an argument to support the sustainability of the application site and accessibility to other services, including rail. As the

Transport Assessment states, the station would only be accessible to experienced cyclists and those ready to put themselves at risk.

4.22. Cycling is not an option available to most future residents of the development as there is a lack of cycling infrastructure in Wivelsfield Green and long distances within the surrounding countryside that makes travelling to further away services, facilities and other settlements unviable for the vast majority of residents. There is a problem with the safety of the existing road network and the perception of safety by all users in the absence of a segregated cycle route and safe cycle storage at the station. Moreover, cycling is not available to all potential residents, as children, older residents and those with limited mobility would not be able to travel by cycle even a short distance due to the absence of a safe and convenient route.

4.23. The Transport Statement suggests that there are a number of local facilities (including the school) that are at an easy and short cycle ride from the application site. However, realistically, none of these facilities (with the potential exception of the recreation ground and the village hall) are within a safe and convenient distance to most residents in the development. Even the school is located only a few minutes away by bicycle but their users (primary school students) would not perceive Green Road and South Road as a safe route to travel to school. Most users would end up, given their age, travelling by car with parents, instead of cycling on their own.

4.24. The cycling route to the nearest stations in Burgess Hill (Wivelsfield Station and Burgess Hill Station) would require cyclists to travel on rural roads, including the B2112 road where there is a significant amount of traffic travelling at high speeds, being some areas at national speed limit. No part of the route would be on a segregated cycle route but instead the whole route would be shared with cars on a dangerous 15 minute trip to Wivelsfield Station and 20 minutes to Burgess Hill Station.

4.25. The evidence on recent road incidents in the last 5 years on the map below illustrates that the route to Wivelsfield Station has seen, in the last five-year period, a total of 19 slight incidents and 4 serious incidents. The route to Burgess Hill Station adds a total of 22 slight incidents and 8 serious incidents. These routes are therefore not appropriate cycling routes. Importantly, they are not routes that could be perceived safe by any potential user, therefore deterring people from cycling to Burgess Hill (nearest large settlement) and the nearest railway stations.

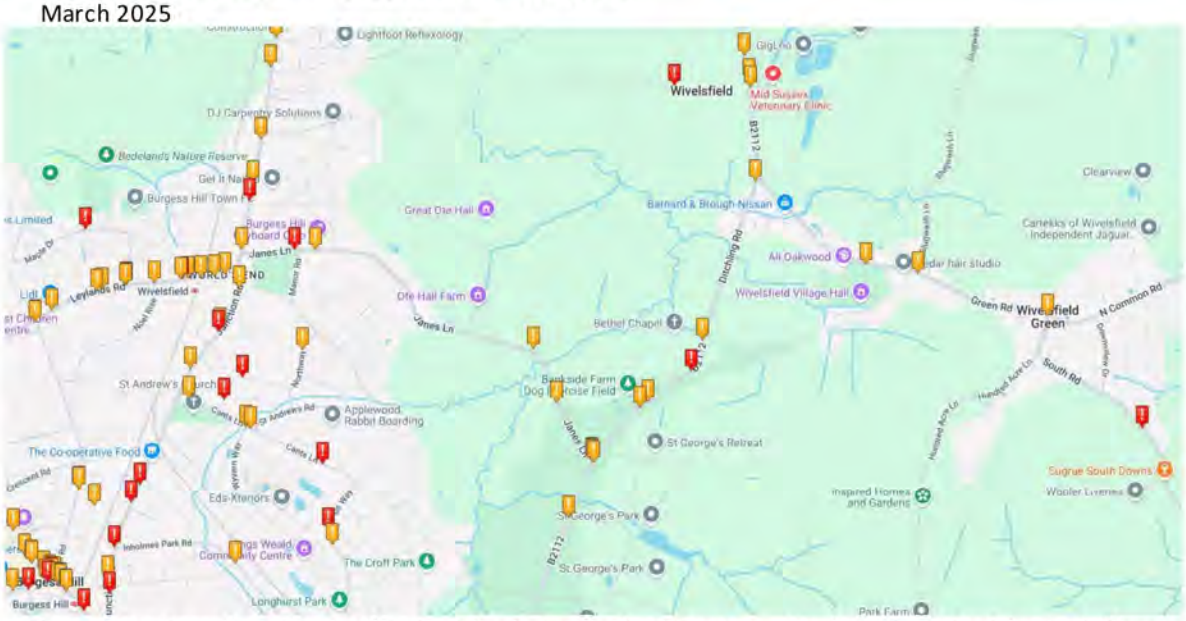



*Figure 6: Map showing traffic incidents in the last 5 years. Red: serious incident. Yellow: slight incident. Source: Crashmap.co.uk*

4.26. In terms of walking, the proposed development includes new footways on Eastern Road and connecting to Eastern Road via a breakthrough in the existing group of trees, as well as a footway along the new access road from Green Road. There are a number of indicative paths proposed within the LGS and connections to the existing public right of way network and it identifies a potential segregated cycle/pedestrian access route onto Green Road.




*Figure 7: Isochrone 15-minute walking map from the application site.*

4.27. Unfortunately, the scheme's location is a critical factor that defines the walking potential for future residents, where improved walking infrastructure would have a very limited capacity to increase walkers in a highly car-dependent location.

4.28. As shown on the 15-minute walking isochrone map, only Wivelsfield Green village is within adequate walking distance to future residents, and no facilities or services on the edges of the village would be reachable in 15 minutes walking or less. It also illustrates that there is no higher-tier settlement, railway station or employment area, amongst other services and facilities, (as discussed above), within walking distance.




*Figure 8: Plan submitted by the Applicant showing the proposed changes to Eastern Road.*

4.29. Not only would the proposed footways on Eastern Road be impactful in landscape character terms, but they would also be inconvenient for residents. The proposed pedestrian route would not always follow 'desire lines', which are the most direct routes available to reach a destination, requiring pedestrians to cross Eastern Road as well as follow a new footway that does not follow the line of the road for the first few metres. The first stretch of the route when joining the road is poorly designed and would result in an informal path through the green verge between the road and the footway.

4.30. Furthermore, the pedestrian route is located on the western side of the road for most of its length, requiring pedestrians to cross two roads (Eastern Road and Green Park Corner) as well as the vehicular accesses to the village hall and recreation ground car park. We are concerned that this is not a convenient route for pedestrians, especially for those with less mobility as it would require walking or wheeling up and down the crossing kerb and crossing several junctions with traffic could lead to an unnecessary safety risk. Finally, the Applicant has not explained how the proposed footway along the western side of Eastern Road will tackle the ongoing informal car park shown in Figure 9 below and what the potential impact of

a new footway in this location would be on parking availability and pedestrian safety.



*Figure 9: Informal car park along Eastern Road. On busy event days at the village hall, the entire length of this verge becomes informal car parking. Source: Google Streetview.*

4.31. The pedestrian environment designed in the layout (masterplan) is poor insofar as it is full of cul-de-sacs and routes with dead ends. Whilst some may provide pedestrian permeability, they are not legible routes and wayfinding would not be easy. Therefore, the environment proposed would be hostile for pedestrians and again, car users would be prioritised, contrary to Policy DM25 (Design) of Local Plan Part 2. The layout seems to favour car use and be determined by highway standards instead of pedestrian convenience, safety and maximising active travel and sustainable transport. Most of the walking infrastructure is formed by informal paths within the LGS which do nothing to support residents in terms of movement and accessibility for their daily life and activities. They are simply recreational routes.

4.32. In the absence of a sustainable location and a well-designed pedestrian-friendly environment (layout), WPC is concerned that the proposed development would fail to meet section 8 of the NPPF, which requires aiming to achieve healthy places that enable and support healthy lives, including layouts that encourage walking and cycling.

4.33. Wivelsfield is located in an unsustainable location and its poor public transport services are not reliable for daily tasks or recreation. The bus service does not reach most services and facilities in the District, and it only provides some degree of 'reliable' connection to Haywards Heath, but not to the other services available in Lewes District and Burgess Hill. It is also an insufficient bus service for the location of the development proposed, especially in combination with the unplanned and granted planning permissions for new development which exceed by

10 times the amount of development planned by the JCS and the WPNP for Wivelsfield Green.

| Bus Stop(s) | Service | Route | Number of Bus Services | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Mon-Fri | | | Sat | Sun |
| | | | AM Peak | Off Peak | PM Peak | | |
| Green Road | 149 | Scaynes Hill - Chailey School | 1 | 1 | 0 | No service | No service |
| | 166 | Lewes - Haywards Heath | 1 | 3 | 1 | 4 | No service |
| Green Road & Ote Hall | 167 Village Rider | Lewes - Burgess Hill | 1 | 0 | 1 | No service | No service |
| Eastern Road, Green Road, & Ote Hall | 168 Village Rider | Burgess Hill - Burgess Hill | 0 | 1 | 0 | No service | No service |
| Ote Hall | 271 | Crawley - Kemp Town | 2 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 4 |
| | 272 | Haywards Heath - Crawley | 1 | 3 | 2 | 5 | No service |

*Figure 10: Extract from the Transport Assessment showing the bus routes and frequency.*

4.34. The proposed development would have poor accessibility to higher tier settlements in the vicinity (and District), where most facilities, services, jobs, retail and leisure opportunities are available. This is shown in the table below, which also include settlements as per on the most up-to-date Settlement Hierarchy Review (2025).

| Higher tier settlement | Weekday bus service from Wivelsfield Green | Weekend bus service from Wivelsfield Green |
|---|---|---|
| **Haywards Heath** | Total of 18 services/day. Of which, 11 are from a bus stop at the B2112 (1.3km from the site or 20 mins walk), the other 7 services are from the village, 2 of which only run during term time. | 14 services on Saturday, of which 10 are from the bus stop at the B2112.<br>4 services on Sunday, from the bus stop at the B2112 (20 mins walk). |
| **Burgess Hill** | 3 services a day following a convoluted long route | No service |
| **Lewes** | 7 services/day | 4 services on Saturday.<br>No service son Sunday |
| **District Centre** Seaford | No service | No service |
| **District Centre** Newhaven | No service | No service |
| **Service Centre** Peacehaven & Telscombe | No service | No service |
| **Service Centre** Ringmer | No service | No service |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Service Village** Plumpton Green | 2 services a day only on school days | No service |
| **Service Village** Newick | No service | No service |

4.35. As shown above, the existing bus service available from the application site (within a reasonable and inclusive walking distance of less than 10 minutes) is very limited, and so poor that it would not constitute a reliable and sufficient service to provide a reasonable alternative to car use.

4.36. The Transport Assessment submitted by the Applicant states that the available service is reasonable as it connects key destinations. However, this is not accurate as most services in the District and the two larger settlements across the Mid Sussex District border (Haywards Heath and Burgess Hill) nearby are not sufficiently connected via an accessible and inclusive route. Buses do not run at times that would allow the majority of people to use them to travel to and from work, and the lack of frequency and distance from the site would similarly make them inappropriate for the purposes of shopping or accessing medical/leisure facilities. The most reliable bus service to reach Haywards Heath requires a 20-minute walk from the site, along Green Road and the B2112, which would not be an adequate route for most users, especially older generations and young people, or those with less mobility. The distance and the perception of safety on a busy road would be factors that would deter potential users. Given the location of the site, travelling by private car would be the most convenient and preferred option by residents.

4.37. For the above reasons, WPC considers that the proposed development is not located in a sustainable location, and that the sustainable transport options have not been prioritised in the application, as required in the NPPF (paragraph 115). Not all modes of transport are given sufficient consideration in the application, especially when they could be used by people with less mobility and all users in general, as public transport (bus) is poor and, for some services, inaccessible, and other active travel options are not feasible given the location and existing infrastructure. The development fails to maximise opportunities to connect to the bus network and encourage public transport use.

4.38. Furthermore, WPC is concerned with the increased traffic as result of the proposed development, which would lead to impacts on road safety for current villagers and future residents. The increased traffic on Green Road and the proposed access to Green Road are of particular concern. This access point would become a problematic break of the continuous pedestrian route along Green Road that currently connects the eastern and western parts of the settlement. Whilst a segregated pedestrian/cycle path would be provided within the site, this would not be the most direct route for existing villages and would mainly serve future residents. This is especially concerning as the Transport Assessment submitted suggests that there would be more than 1 vehicular movement per minute through the access point (between 68 and 76 trips per hour), worsening the existing

pedestrian safety environment on Green Road. Therefore, WPC believes that the proposed pedestrian infrastructure would not benefit existing residents and that the proposed access (and associated traffic) would lead to increased road safety.

4.39. We are also concerned that the Road Safety Audit has not dealt properly with the identified problem C, at the proposed eastern pedestrian and cycle access point. The audit only recommends terminating the cycleway at the junction with the existing footway along Green Road and the provision of a drop kerb for cyclists to travel on the carriageway surface from that point onwards. This is an unacceptable solution as the proposed junction would regardless of the drop kerb, increase the potential for collisions with pedestrians. The termination of the cycleway would also entail that there is no continuation of the cycle infrastructure elsewhere, not inviting potential users to utilise it. It would also lead to a potential risk of collision with other vehicles travelling on Green Road. Furthermore, the Road Safety Audit recommendations include additional signage, which would increase clutter in the area and cause harm to local character.

4.40. Core Policy 13 of the JCS states that "*The local planning authority will promote and support development that encourages travel by walking, cycling and public transport, and reduces the proportion of journeys made by car, in order to help achieve a rebalancing of transport in favour of sustainable modes by: a) Ensuring that new development is located in sustainable locations with good access to schools, shops, jobs and other key services by walking, cycling and public transport in order to reduce the need to travel by car.*" It is clear, in consideration of the issues raised with sustainability and accessibility above, that **the proposed development fails to comply with Core Policy 13 of the JCS and sections 2 and 9 of the NPPF**

4.41. Finally, it is also worth highlighting that the S106 Head of Terms submitted with the application suggests that financial contributions towards the provision of necessary and directly related infrastructure and services that is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development will be discussed with the Council and secured in a S106 legal agreement. Notwithstanding this, there is no material proposal for the improvement of the existing infrastructure (beyond a footway along Eastern Road that has already been discussed) and there are no proposed improved facilities and public transport services. In the absence of such proposals, WPC considers that the planning application is incomplete and any intended financial contribution towards transport and accessibility should be provided at this stage, and WPC should be given the opportunity to review and comment upon it. In the absence of this information, the proposal also conflicts with Core Policy 13 JCS as it fails to "*contribute to improved sustainable transport infrastructure, including the provision of safe and reliable sustainable transport modes*".

*Residential Travel Plan*

4.42. The Residential Travel Plan submitted with the application states that it aims to:

- Encourage the use of more sustainable transport modes.
- Reduce the need to travel overall.
- Encourage the use of sustainable travel by improving facilities and providing information.

4.43. Notwithstanding the aspirations above, the project's sustainability and transport behaviours will be determined primarily by its location and the services, facilities, employment and public transport available in the vicinity. As public transport is unreliable for daily normal activities such as commuting to work or high-level studies, the only sustainable options available are walking and cycling. However, these would only provide access for some people (routes not safe or not perceived safe by all), during certain periods of time (weather and light dependent), and rely on the services, employment, facilities and overall, the destinations available within a walking and cycling distance. We discussed in the section above that these are very limited, and the Settlement Hierarchy Review Update acknowledges this.

4.44. Considering the above, it is concerning that the Residential Travel Plan proposes high-level aims and a vision that are both unrealistic and disconnected from the site and its location. It proposes a Travel Plan Coordinator with empty management tasks and responsibilities, mainly consisting of informing, collecting data and facilitating contacts, but there are no actions that would materially alter people's behaviour from driving cars to cycling, walking or using public transport because the relevant infrastructure and services are not available in this location.

4.45. Another of the key measures in the Residential Travel Plan is the provision to all new residents of a 'welcome pack' with information on how to move around the village on foot and by cycle as well as available public transport options, taxis, etc. It also suggests that this should be accompanied by bus and rail tickets. Notwithstanding this, public transport research has robustly demonstrated that, in most cases, the price of public transport is not an impediment to its regular use. Instead, the lack of a frequent and reliable service is what deters people from using public transport. In this regard, it is clear that the welcome pack is not a useful tool or incentive for future residents to switch from car use to public transport. Importantly, the welcome pack is only expected to be distributed to new occupiers, but would future residents in properties that are sold again benefit from the pack? Who enforces the plan? If the effect of the welcome pack was already 'almost negligible', it would be nil when new generations of residents move to the development.

4.46. Noticeboards are also proposed as part of the Residential Travel Plan, but the plan is non-committal and only suggestive of content for notice boards. Moreover, these boards would not be adding significant new information to residents, who

would normally know well the area where they live and would have an understanding of where footpaths and bus services are and where travel information can be obtained. It is information that would not normally change travel behaviours in places where car travel will always be the most convenient and safe option for all.

4.47. Other measures in the Residential Travel Plan are somewhat absurd, in the transportation and location context already explained. Community events, copies of bus/rail maps, leaflets of information, cycling events promotion, etc. will do nothing to change people's travel behaviours from car use to public transport and active travel options. The proposed secured cycle parking facilities within the site would be useful if there were sufficient safe, connected and convenient infrastructure to cycle to destinations in the area, but unfortunately, this is not the case. Finally, the only car-sharing initiative in the Residential Travel Plan is a car-sharing notice board for residents to swap information on this matter, but no actual material and more meaningful measures such as car clubs are proposed.

4.48. For the reasons explained above, WPC considers that the Residential Travel Plan is empty of actual material measures to increase public transport use and active travel and will be ineffective in making residents switch from car use to other more sustainable modes. The main obstacle to this is the location and nature of the development in such an unsustainable location.

**Conclusion**

4.49. WPC disagrees with LDC's pre-application advice, which suggests that the site is in a relatively sustainable location. The proposed development is highly unsustainable due to its location away from important services, and where no sustainable transport is sufficiently available. The village scores low in the settlement hierarchy and the most up-to-date evidence corroborates this and confirms that the village is moving down in the hierarchy, especially due to the insufficient sustainable transport options, where it scores very low. Therefore, development should be directed to other more sustainable locations and good evidence of this is the spatial strategy and early housing allocation proposals in the emerging Lewes District Local Plan.

4.50. Access to Wivelsfield and Burgess Hill Train Stations are not practical by walking or cycling and no bus service is available to connect to rail services. Therefore, the village is isolated from rail services and the larger settlements by means of sustainable transport and active travel. Cycling in the area is not safe nor convenient to future residents, and cycling has a very limited (if not negligible) capacity to change behaviours in a car-dominated environment where all services, jobs, facilities, and leisure opportunities are available only by car.

4.51. Most of the local facilities mentioned in the Transport Assessment are not conveniently and safely accessible by cycle as there are not segregated cycle routes and walking is only feasible to some of the facilities in the area, which are limited.

4.52. Overall, the development is oriented towards individual car use, through its location and its layout design which punishes pedestrians instead. It is WPC's view that **the proposal is an unsustainable form of development and should not be supported as it fails to meet the Development Plan objectives and Core Policy 13 of the JCS and would not constitute sustainable development, also not complying with chapters 2 and 9 of the NPPF (2024).**

# 5. Local Green Space

5.1. WPC is supportive of any enhancement of the designated Local Green Space (LGS), especially where it involves enabling public access and a better experience to all residents in Wivelsfield, including an improved amenity and recreational value, as well as its beauty and biodiversity. Notwithstanding this, WPC focuses on protecting and conserving the LGS, as defined in the NPPF and policy 7 of the WPNP. In that regard, WPC is concerned that the proposed works to the designated LGS are only put forward with a disproportionate amount of development within adjacent fields and within the actual LGS, which is contrary to the spatial strategy of the Development Plan, and that associated necessary works would lead to development within the designated LGS which are in conflict with the WPNP and the NPPF.




*Figure 11: Map extract of the Wivelsfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan showing the extent of the local green space designated in Policy 7.*

5.2. Policy 7 of the WPNP designates the area shown above as a Local Green Space, which is protected from development unless it constitutes minor development ancillary to public recreational use, or it is required for utility development. It is also important to highlight that the designation of the Local Green Space passed the examination of the WPNP, in which the Examiner supported its inclusion, removing other four sites from the potential list of destination. The designation was

supported with 96% of the votes at the WPNP Referendum, highlighting the immense support of the local community to the WPNP strategy and designation of the land South of Green Road as a Local Green Space in its entirely and under the conditions set out in Policy 7 and its supporting text.

5.3. The proposed development within the designated local green space involves the following:

- New vehicular access from Green Road.
- Road from Green Road to field E to the west (200m) and associated works.
- A network of paths and a cycling route.
- 0.5 hectares of land for Wivelsfield Primary School extension.
- SuDS features (swales).

5.4. The Planning Statement submitted with the application refers to the pre-application advice given by LDC explaining that the above development is appropriate when applying Green Belt policy tests. We have assessed the proposed development against the Development Plan and the NPPF and we have reached a different conclusion, in which proposals constitute inappropriate development within an LGS designation.



| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Parish or Town | | |
| | Wivelsfield | | |
| | Site Area | 2.1 Ha | |
| | Greenfield or Previously Developed: Greenfield | | |
| | Proposed Development | | |
| | Residential | | |
| | Site Source | | |
| | 2018 SHELAA | | |
| Current or Last Use | Agricultural | | |
| Recent and Relevant Planning History | No recent or relevant planning history | | |
| Theoretical Residential Capacity | 47 homes | Indicative Density | 30 dph |
| LAA Indicative Residential Capacity | 47 homes | | |
| LAA Indicative Employment Capacity | 0 Ha | | |




*Figure 12: Extracts from LDC's 2023 Land Availability Assessment and the pre-application response identifying fields A to F within the application site*

5.5. Before assessing the proposed development against the Development Plan and the NPPF, it is worth referring to the 2023 Lewes District Land Availability Assessment, which only identified potential for residential development in the parcel of land shown above (known as parcel E in the pre-application response) and excluded development potential outside of this area (south and east of the red line or parcel E). It also acknowledges that access to parcel E would have to be provided from Eastern Road or Green Road, and it warned of the problems of gaining access from Eastern Road due to the lack of footways on the road, and the potential negative impacts on landscape character of a new access from Green Road.

5.6. The following section includes an assessment of the proposed development, within the LGS, against the Development Plan and the NPPF.




*Figure 13: Extract from the Development Framework Plan showing the proposed development within the LGS.*

**Development Plan test**

5.7. Having established the LAA background of the area, it is also worth stressing that the supporting text of policy 7 of the WPNP (Local Green Space) states the following:

> *"This policy proposes one important green space in the Parish to be protected from development by the designation as Local Green Spaces in accordance with paras 76-77 of the NPPF (now 106-107 NPPF 2024). [...] Once designated,* ***the policy will resist all proposals for development unless it can be clearly demonstrated they are minor, they are ancillary to a public recreation use or they are required for utilities development.****"*

5.8. According to the WPNP, the only development types that would be supported within the LGS would be those associated with utilities and those that are ancillary to the public recreational use of the LGS. The proposed development, as outlined above, includes car infrastructure: a new vehicular access, a 200m long road and

associated footway, surface water drainage features, and a yet undefined extension to Wivelsfield Primary School. None of these are minor development, utilities development or ancillary recreational development. They are only proposed as part of residential development and as the necessary infrastructure to support a major residential development adjacent to the LGS. There is no actual functional connection between the proposed development within the LGS and its function as a local green space: the proposed development (access, road, school extension...) would not be necessary for accessing and enjoying the LGS by the local community. Moreover, the developments proposed within the LGS would erode some of the key characteristics of the LGS for which it was initially designated, such as being a rural break between settlements and ribbon development, its tranquillity and its sense of place.

5.9. This LGS is important to the local community, as people see it as the only truly important rural break in the ribbon development and an important green infrastructure asset. It also provides pupils at the school a sense of rural values, beauty and tranquillity and it offers views valued by the community. The designation of the LGS was also strongly supported by East Sussex County Council during the Regulation 14 consultation due to the proximity to the village primary school which overlooks the sweep of this attractive landscape close to the centre of the village.

*Access and road*

5.10. Whilst the Applicant states that the development will improve the accessibility of the LGS as it would become publicly accessible, there are development proposals within that are unacceptable regardless. The vehicular access and road would reduce the amount of open space available to the local community and designated LGS. Furthermore, the road and access would only provide vehicular access to future residents outside of the LGS, it would not provide a service to the local community as it would not increase the open space's accessibility itself, as the vehicular route only takes people from Green Road to the residential development. The LGS could be currently accessible by foot from Green Road via a field gate and new pedestrian accesses could be provided to improve its permeability and accessibility, but the vehicular access and road infrastructure does not improve public use directly or indirectly. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that the development of car infrastructure within the LGS would be ancillary to its LGS recreational or any other use. It would actually reduce the available LGS and would be contrary to the aim of the WPNP with regard to Local Green Spaces.

*School extension*

5.11. The development also includes a potential extension of Wivelsfield Primary School within the LGS (on the eastern edge of the open space), which would be contrary to the WPNP designation of the area as LGS.

5.12. It is unclear whether the proposed extension of the school by 0.5 hectares would potentially entail new buildings, surfaces, boundary treatments, etc. But it would definitely change the nature of the space and its use, which is yet undetermined as the proposal only offers part of the LGS for the school extension (use), but its future in terms of buildings, structures and other development is yet to be clarified.




*Figure 14: Extract from the WPNP (Policy 3: Education), which identifies within a red line the curtilage of the Wivelsfield Primary School.*

5.13. The WPNP already has a policy framework for the potential extension of the school grounds, should an extension be necessary in the future. Policy 3 of the WPNP relates to education and supports proposals for the extension of Wivelsfield Primary School, provided that buildings are of an appropriate scale and in a location that avoids compromising the open character of the land to the west (referring to the LGS). The supporting text of policy 3 also highlights the importance of the LGS as a gap between the two parts of the settlement by acknowledging that the school site could accommodate new buildings, but that these should be located within the school grounds and should not undermine e integrity of the gap (LGS to the west). The Applicant does not provide any certainty on whether the 0.5 hectares extension the school would be compliant with policy 3 of the WPNP.

5.14. Core Policy 7 of the JCS also relates to community infrastructure, and supports the protection, retention and enhancement of existing community facilities, such as Wivelsfield Primary School. When extensions to facilities or new facilities are proposed, LPP1 states that these should be located within the defined planning boundaries (settlement boundaries) and exceptionally, these may be located outside settlement boundaries when it can be demonstrated that it is the only practical option and the site is well related to an existing settlement.

5.15. The proposed land for extending the school is located outside the settlement boundary and there is no justification included in the proposal that would demonstrate compliance with Core Policy 7. Whilst it is acknowledged that it is practicable to extend the school on an adjacent field, there is no assessment of why the proposed location is the only practicable option, especially given its LGS designation.

5.16. The 0.5 hectares parcel of land proposed for extending the primary school is located within the LGS and therefore the LGS would be predetermining the principle, nature and scale of development that could take place within the 0.5 ha parcel of land, as any proposal should comply with the WPNP and policies 3 and 7 in particular. Therefore, we are of the view that the Applicant's offer to give land within the LGS for the extension of the school is not as good as it sounds and likely not compliant with the Development Plan. There is no certainty to the school that the facility would be extendable within the 0.5 ha parcel of land, as it is protected as LGS land.

*Surface drainage infrastructure*

5.17. Two large SuDS features are also proposed within the LGS. These are two long and wide swales located immediately south of the new access road junction and the breakthrough of the western boundary of the LGS. These swales are proposed for the purposes of intercepting surface water as it flows down from higher ground level and thus protect the residential development from surface water flooding.

5.18. These swales are engineering operations that constitute development and are not utilities, but part of the flood risk mitigation strategy for the residential development and public right of way to the west of the LGS. Unfortunately, this development is located within the LGS designation and is not an acceptable engineering operation (development). Nor is it a use that would be compatible with the LGS designation and the purposes of the open space for the local community and is protected as such.

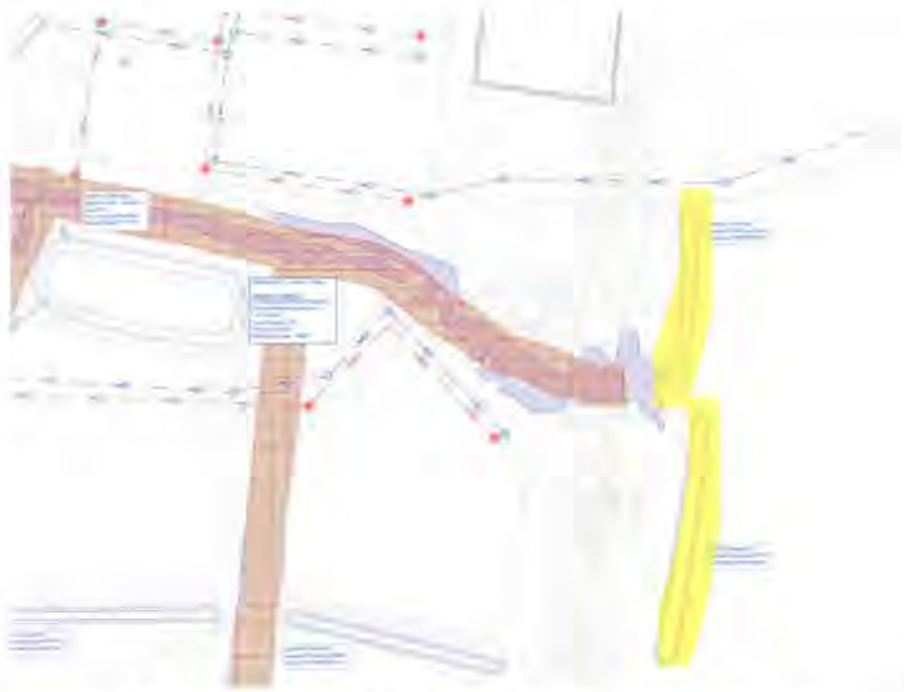


*Figure 15: Extract from the DRA highlighting the proposed swales within the LGS along its western boundary (right).*

5.19. Furthermore, the proposed swales are two large features that would lead to negative impacts on the landscape character of the LGS and would affect the retention and viability of existing trees, as these features require digging underground and no assessment of their impact on trees' root system has been considered.

5.20. WPC considers that the proposed development within LGS would lead to detrimental impacts on landscape character and would constitute development that fails to comply with policies 3 and 7 of the WPNP, Core Policy 7 of the JCS and the spatial strategy in policy DM1 of LPP2.

**NPPF test**

5.21. The NPPF states that "*policies and decisions for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with national policy for Green Belts*". We have carefully examined the Green Belt chapter of the NPPF (2024), and we consider that the proposed development is not compliant with the Green Belt national planning policy test for the reasons below.

5.22. The proposed development includes an undercover review of the boundary of the LGS, which should be done by plan-makers only and not via a planning application. This is the case as with Green Belts, where the NPPF is clear that boundaries should only be altered when fully evidenced exceptional circumstances apply and through Local Plans. The proposal involves bisecting the LGS in two sections, through a new road, as well as potentially losing or altering part of the LGS through a school extension and with drainage infrastructure. The resulting spaces,

from splitting the LGS, would entail a community orchard north of the new road, and a larger piece of land south of the proposed road and access.

5.23. The Applicant claims in the Planning Statement that the proposal in the LGS is not 'inappropriate development', as defined in the NPPF Green Belt chapter. However, the NPPF states in paragraph 154 that **the forms of development** (engineered operations and local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location) **would not be considered inappropriate if they preserve the openness of the land and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it**.

5.24. The proposed development is partly engineered operations and partly transport infrastructure, as well as a yet undefined development (school extension) that could entail a material change in the use of land to a school building extension. In all cases above-mentioned, the development should preserve the openness of the land and not conflict with the purposes of designating the land as LGS.

5.25. WPC also disagrees with LDC's pre-application advice and the Applicant's interpretation that the proposed access and road would be an appropriate development of local transport infrastructure. The way it is proposed, both access and road are necessary elements to a private residential development that is contrary to the spatial strategy in the Development Plan. The proposed infrastructure would only serve this development, it would not form part of the local road network, and would not be part of the cycling and walking infrastructure, as there are more direct routes proposed as part of the development for walkers and cyclists. This road and access do not serve Wivelsfield's local community; it is only a necessary feature to deliver a development that is not appropriate in this location for the reasons explained in these representations.

*Lack of demonstrated requirement for a LGS location*

5.26. We also challenge that the proposed access road "*can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location*", or a location within the LGS, in this case. The pre-application advice given by LDC considered the two potential access options for the development, and even with the objection of the Landscape Officer to the proposed road due to the negative suburbanisation and openness impacts associated to it, LDC suggested that it was preferable to access via Green Road than Eastern Road due to the potentially required widening works to Eastern Road and the potential impacts upon its character. Notwithstanding this, there has been no assessment of the potential access and road options and their landscape impact, therefore proposals have been made with regards to access in the absence of sufficient and robust landscape and highways evidence in support.

5.27. In light of the above, we raise concerns with the Applicant's approach to accessing the site via the designated LGS rather than exploring, with sufficient evidence, all other options that would not entail a new access and 200 metres of road and associated works within a designated asset by the WPNP. Consequently, it

is not sufficiently demonstrated that the proposed access road requires a LGS location as there are a range of options that have not been assessed sufficiently with robust evidence.

5.28. It can also be questioned whether there is enough justification for this piece of infrastructure, especially when reviewing the recently adopted fourth East Sussex Local Transport Plan 2024 – 2050 (TLP4). The road is not found in any of the proposed transport schemes supported in the TLP4 and does not deliver on the overall objectives and policy D4 (supporting sustainable development and development control) of TLP4.

*Preservation of openness*

5.29. WPC is also concerned that the proposed development would cause a significant suburbanising impact on Green Road, the LGS and its setting. We are particularly worried by the proposed new vehicular access and 200 metres long road. The road is a highly engineered feature that raises the ground level from the current natural topography with artificial banks, hard materials, signage and activity, increasing the busyness of the LGS and changing its overall character and appearance.

5.30. The space is currently a large area of arable land, with undulating natural slopes and highly rural and agricultural in character. It is intrinsically open in character, as there are no structures, hard surfaces, posts... even almost no trees within. Therefore, it feels open and clear of any element beyond crops on the ground. The proposed infrastructure would alter this condition and would entail breaking through the existing hedgerow, a new access and 200 metres-long road that would be wide enough as for two lanes, a footway on each side and hedgerow planting along the 200 metres. Furthermore, given the sloping ground of the site and the vehicular route being designed perpendicular to contour lines, the road would require a significant amount of banking in order to provide an accessible route for vehicles and pedestrians (especially for those with limited mobility). This would lead to more than significant changes on the character of the LGS and on how it is perceived, with significant changes that break the currently uninterrupted open space with suburban paraphernalia. It would also lead to splitting the LGS into two sections, one each side of the road. The road itself, and all its associated changes (banks, signage, vehicles, hedgerow, etc.) would impede perceiving the LGS as an open space free of interruptions, as shaped by the natural landscape and agriculture.

5.31. Contrary to the views of the Applicant, **we consider that the proposed development within the LGS will have a negative impact on the openness of the LGS, to a degree that it won't preserve its open character**, especially when experienced from Green Road (regarding road and access) and from Hundred Acre Lane (regarding the school extension).

*Conflict with the purposes of LGS*

5.32. WPC is concerned with the lack of use/functional connection between the proposed surface water drainage infrastructure, vehicular access, road and associated works, as well as the school extension with the purposes of designation of the LGS. The LGS was designated for the following purpose, as stated in the supporting text of policy 7 WPNP:

*"This agricultural land is valued by the community because, apart from the recreation ground, it is the* ***only truly rural break in the ribbon development****, which stretches from the B2112 to the Mormon Meeting House in North Common Road. It meets the requirements of Paragraph 77 of the NPPF in that it is central to the community it serves;* ***has an acknowledged beauty and tranquillity; and is local in character*** *but not an extensive tract of land, covering only 7.4 hectares. It is an important landscape feature providing the primary school pupils with a real sense of rural values and it is adjacent to Ancient Woodland.* ***It is also a fitting background to the War Memorial*** *that is sited in the west corner. This land was part of Wivelsfield Common, which was enclosed in 1626 by consent of the commoners and lord of the manor, who got 100 acres hence Hundred Acre Lane. The boundaries of the former common are defined in the 8th century charter.*

***There are long views from the school and roads over this area giving a unique sense of space and a sense of tranquillity and beauty. This green space frames Wivelsfield Green, its landscape giving a sense of place through a balanced combination of land form and land cover."***

5.33. In consideration of the above purpose for its designation, it is clear that the proposed development within the LGS would conflict with the following LGS purposes:

| Extracts from the purpose of designation of the LGS (WPNP) | WPC's assessment of compliance with the purpose of designation |
|---|---|
| ***"It is the only truly rural break in the ribbon development, which stretches from the B2112 to the Mormon Meeting House in North Common Road"*** | Importantly, the LGS not only works as a rural break, a gap of agricultural land and open space between the two settlement boundaries. It also, as acknowledged in the WPNP, provides the only rural break of the ribbon development along Green Road. It provides an uninterrupted edge to Green Road with a single agricultural access, which is understated and appropriate to the rural setting. The proposed development, however, would add a suburban and highway-standardised, wide bell-mouth access, which would break the verdant continuous hedgerow line along the LGS edge. The gap would also be filled with additional development (e.g. road) which would also interrupt the rural break. |
| ***"Has an acknowledged beauty and tranquillity; and is local in character"*** | The lack of vehicular traffic within the LGS is an asset valued by the local community and contributes towards its perceived tranquillity due to the lack of human-related activity, vehicular noise, signs, lights, and overall nature of the rural landscape. |

| | |
|---|---|
| ***"It is also a fitting background to the War Memorial that is sited in the west corner"*** | The existing uninterrupted background would be broken and lost by new highway infrastructure (access road and associated works), therefore changing the backdrop of the memorial from a rural background to a more suburban one of reduced depth as it would be located between the memorial and the woodland and higher ground to the south. |
| ***"There are long views from the school and roads over this area giving a unique sense of space and a sense of tranquillity and beauty"*** | The long views from the school would be significantly altered as the views would become shorter as the depth of the LGS would be actually reduced, as it would be filled with road infrastructure. |
| ***"This green space frames Wivelsfield Green"*** | The LGS would stop framing Wivelsfield Green, as it would be interrupted with highway infrastructure and other development, reducing the LGS role of framing spaces. The LGS works as a frame to the settlement as it is empty (as frames are defined by providing an edge to an empty space) and focuses elements on its edges, in this case, hedgerows and trees, and any development sits only beyond the edges. Unfortunately, this proposal includes access breaking the edges (frame) and road, drainage and school extensions that would alter its edge and filling, resulting in diffused edges with a reduced capacity to frame the space beyond. |
| ***"Its landscape giving a sense of place through a balanced combination of land form and land cover"*** | The current agricultural and open, uninterrupted character provides a magnificent and deeply rural setting to the village, where there is a strong sense of being in Wivelsfield, between two settlements (east and west), and in a location shaped by centuries of agriculture. Whilst some of the proposal would increase biodiversity, the proposed development would suburbanise and standardise the space in a way that is incompatible with the strong rural and agricultural sense of place, land form (topography abovementioned) and land cover (arable land). |

5.34. In consideration of the above, WPC concludes that **the proposed development within the designated LGS would conflict with the purposes of designation of the land south of Green Road as a LGS in the Wivelsfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan** and that allowing this development within the LGS would set out a worrying precedent that would weaken significantly the LGS designation.

**Conclusion**

5.35. The Applicant states that the LGS will remain undeveloped, but we have explained in these representations that the LGS would see significant change through new development that would erode the LGS and its openness and character in particular.

5.36. We have also explained that the proposed access road is not an appropriate form of development in the LGS and that the application has not demonstrated that the LGS location is required for the access and road. Furthermore, WPC has also raised concerns with the significant areas of conflict between the proposed development and the purposes of designation of the LGS.

5.37. In conclusion, whilst WPC is supportive of enabling the public use of the LGS and improving biodiversity and active travel routes in general, we object to the developments proposed as explained above, as we consider them contrary to the Development Plan and the NPPF (2024).

# 6. Housing

6.1. Core Policy 1 of the JCS requires development of this scale to include at least 40% of affordable homes. This policy also requires affordable rented and intermediate housing, to be included in the affordable housing mix, stating that the guideline affordable housing tenure should be split as follows: 75% affordable rented and 25% intermediate (shared ownership). Notwithstanding this, the JCS leaves the door open for alternative affordable housing mixes based upon the latest evidence of needs in the site locality.

6.2. Core Policy 2 of the JCS relates to housing mix and type: "*In order to deliver sustainable, mixed and balanced communities, the local planning authority will expect housing developments (both market and affordable) to: a) Provide a range of dwelling types and sizes to meet the identified local need, based on the best available evidence. This need will generally include 1 and 2 bedroom homes for single person households and couples with no dependants.*"

6.3. The planning application has been accompanied with a Planning and Affordable Housing Statement and Heads of Terms that are important in the assessment of the potential affordable housing contribution. The main points are summarised below:

- Commitment to provide 40% affordable housing.
- The tenure split is to be negotiated during the determination of the planning application.
- The housing mix is proposed to be a reserved matter.

6.4. WPC considers that, whilst the proportion of affordable housing proposed is compliant with the minimum 40% required in the JCS, the Applicant is not including any material on the affordable housing tenure and the housing mix, for which the Development Plan sets out clear requirements and therefore these should have been considered by the Applicant in their viability assessments. We request the Applicant to publish their proposed tenure and housing type and size mix, as part of the proposals so they can be assessed against the Development Plan. We also request the Applicant to explain how the development contributes to affordable

housing need, giving consideration to the latest housing need data below and the affordable housing units being built, as part of current developments.

6.5. The most recent housing need data from the Parish provides a useful picture of the local housing need:

- There are housing affordability issues for more than half of local wage earners.
- There is a significantly lower proportion of potentially cheaper smaller (one and two bedroom) homes in Wivelsfield Parish compared to Lewes District as a whole.
- At least 20 households with local connection need affordable housing due to the inadequacy of their current housing, and their inability to afford to rent or purchase a suitable property on the open market in Wivelsfield Parish.
- The largest proportion of respondents to the latest housing need survey require a one-bedroom property (70%). This was followed by two bedrooms (20%), three bedrooms (5%), and four bedrooms (5%).
- In terms of location, Wivelsfield Green is the preferred location to live in the Parish.
- The preferred accommodation type is a house followed by bungalows. There was no interest in flats amongst respondents of the survey.

6.6. The LDC pre-application advice letter and the JCS, supported by local housing need evidence, identify an important need for small homes in the District and in Wivelsfield Parish in particular. Therefore, it would be expected for the Applicant to provide an adequate housing mix (sizes and typologies) as well as affordable homes tenures in light of the local evidence here presented.

6.7. Unfortunately, **the submission does not demonstrate compliance with the market and affordable housing mix of Core Policies 1 and 2 of the JCS and the Wivelsfield local housing need**.

# 7. Landscape and design

### Design process and evidence

7.1. Unfortunately, the submitted Design and Access Statement (D&AS) starts with a description of the site that is defined by artificial boundaries, parcels A and B, which only seem to relate to the Applicant's intentions of development: developable areas to the west or parcel A, undeveloped areas to the east, parcel B (LGS). This subdivision of the site into two parcels does not respond to the site's actual landscape evidence and an assessment of landscape character. Actually, the landscape evidence submitted with the application (see Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, December 2024) identifies three parts of the site in the site description, which are based on their intrinsic landscape character. This highlights

the poor start of the design process of this scheme, which is unable to adopt a design approach that responds to evidence.

7.2. The above is especially relevant as the WPNP design policy 5, requires development proposals to reflect and enhance the character and scale of surrounding buildings and of distinctive local landscape features. In order to comply with the above policy, the D&AS should start with a robust and honest understanding of the landscape features and character of the area, not identifying developable areas according to arbitrary decisions, but due to character evidence.

7.3. The Lewes Landscape Character Appraisal (May 2023) sets out a series of landscape management guidelines and development guidelines, which are relevant to this planning application. We have outlined below some of the key guidelines which the development does not comply with:

*Landscape management guidelines*

- Retain and enhance the green and blue infrastructure network.
- Retain and aim to restore historic pattern of field enclosures.
- Retain rural character away from development and roads.

*Development guidelines*

- Development should be concentrated to existing settlement patterns.
- Protect and retain existing vegetation, including ancient woodland and on the edge of settlement areas.
- Any new development should be set within a robust landscape framework.
- Avoid merging of existing settlement areas and consider the cumulative impact of additional development within the landscape.
- Retain and aim to restore historic pattern of field enclosures and settlement.

**Settlement pattern**

7.4. The application site plays a significant role in the local settlement pattern and what constitutes the character of Wivelsfield and its characteristic gap between the two sections of the village. The village is split into two differentiated areas, one to the east and another to the west, with a clear gap between them, which measures 180 metres at its shortest point along Green Road and over 500 metres when measured set back from the road between the school building and the existing houses on Eastern Road.

7.5. Importantly, the adopted LPP2 sets out the spatial strategy for the District and highlights the role of the settlement/planning boundaries, giving special relevance to the gaps between settlements: "*The planning boundaries have been carefully considered, taking into account a range of factors including the existing form, pattern and function of settlements, <u>important 'gaps' of countryside between them</u>, the character and setting of individual towns and villages, and environmental*

*considerations, such as the need to conserve designated areas of national landscape, ecological, geological, or historic importance*." WPC is of the view that the application site plays a significant role in retaining an important gap between settlements that it is not only acknowledged in the WPNP but also in the whole Development Plan, including LPP2.

7.6. This gap is currently formed by agricultural land (either arable or pasture), which speaks of its rural location and the countryside function in the area. It is also undeveloped, and clearly open, only with features that further strengthen the area's strong rural character: trees, hedgerows, understorey vegetation, watercourses, etc. There are no structures, hard surfaces, lighting, sources of noise or other signs of development. This makes the gap not only significant in terms of size (between 180 and 500 metres, covering an area of 21 hectares) but also, importantly rural in character, due to the absence of development and the presence of locally important landscape features and a farming land use.

7.7.

7.8. Furthermore, the character of the site is clearly open, and not just parcel B (eastern parcel designated local green space, known as parcel F by LDC), but all the site, also including the pasture parcel to the southwest. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) submitted with the application demonstrates that this parcel is also characterised by its openness and, photographic evidence, especially of the parcel when viewed from the edge of the ancient woodland, demonstrates it. The only area relatively contained, despite its size, is the northwestern parcel adjacent to the existing housing along Green Road and Eastern Road.

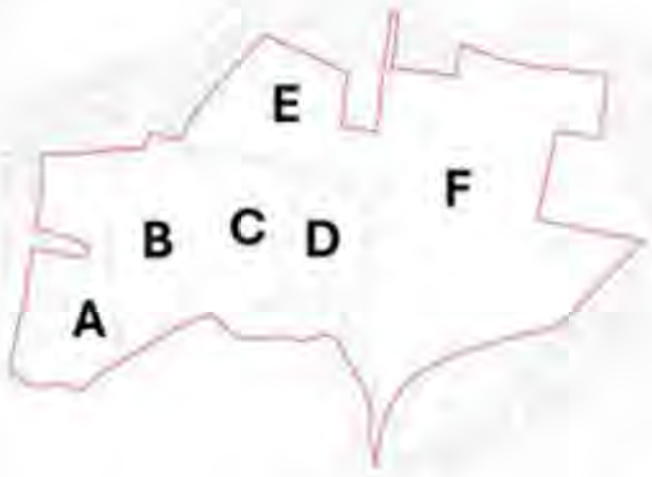



*Figure 16: Map extract of LDC pre-application response identifying fields A to F within the application site.*

7.9. The Landscape Officer raised concerns at pre-application stage with regards to the loss of the linear pattern of the settlement as result of the proposed development.

Any development as proposed would have an uncharacteristic and negative impact on local landscape character and officers only considered suitable for some development what they called field E, which is the parcel of land immediately south of the existing residential development along Green Road. The pre-application advice raised issues with development further south but still this proposal has retained the vast majority of development in fields A – D despite the negative advice by LDC.

7.10. It is also important to note that the settlement pattern of Wivelsfield is formed around the main routes within the village: Green Road, North Common Road and South Road and that open spaces in the village strengthen this pattern by being within areas that are distant from the main routes and between existing development (see the recreation ground as reference). The LVIA submitted with the application acknowledges that this is the established settlement pattern of Wivelsfield, the pattern that makes it different from other villages in the area and identifiable. This linear pattern of development contributes to a sense of place, and it is better defined in the western section of the village, exactly in the area where the development is proposed.



*Figure 17: Map identifying the characteristic linear pattern of the village in yellow, and the main departure from this pattern in orange.*

7.11. The National Design Guide states that well-designed places, buildings and spaces should have a positive and coherent identity that everyone can identify with, and thus, a coherent pattern of development is essential to ensure that built form contributes to local identity and its context. In this regard, it is unfortunate that the proposed development, regardless of the LVIA, officer advice and other landscape evidence (Lewes Landscape Character Appraisal, 2023) proposes development at depth, which is totally uncharacteristic in Wivelsfield. Instead of providing development along the main routes in the village, the proposal includes a new access road and a network of routes and developable areas that depart from any

established pattern of development. This is due to the proposed depth of approximately 7 hectares of development, between 150-300 metres deep into the countryside away from any main route. This departure from established linear character would have negative impacts on landscape character and established positive settlement patterns, especially due to its location on the western section of the village, where the linear pattern is more evident and remains largely unaltered.



*Figure 18: Extract figure-ground diagram from the Applicant's Design and Access Statement clearly illustrating the departure of the proposed development from the established settlement pattern.*

7.12. The LVIA states that the edge of settlement location is an opportunity for the site, with the existing settlement pattern influencing the local character. It also considers that the adjacency of the two villages (Wivelsfield – west part of the settlement, and Wivelsfield Green – east) is a constraint of the site and that a level of separation between the two should be maintained.

7.13. The LVIA adopts a mitigation approach instead of a positive landscape-led approach to design, in which, rather than identifying the capacity of the site in landscape terms, it jumps straight into the mitigation of any harm. Certainly, the best and first approach should have been to identify the capacity of the site and opportunities for conservation and enhancement of the site in landscape terms, thus avoiding harm, rather than focusing on mitigating it. The LVIA therefore makes the wrong interpretation of what landscape-led design means, which suggests that the location and quantum of development was predetermined, and the landscape evidence had little or no influence in these matters.

7.14. The above is evidenced in the LVIA as the document sets out a mitigation strategy covering development envelope, existing vegetation, GI, open spaces and detailed design, rather than identifying the areas that could be suitable for development. This suitability assessment can actually be found in the Landscape Officer comment at the pre-application advice stage, which advises against

development within parcels A, B, C, D and F, only opening the possibility for development in parcel E.

7.15. The LVIA seems to justify this departure in the settlement pattern on previous infill residential developments at Downsview Drive (eastern section of the village), which filled with housing the open undeveloped space between North Common Road and South Road. Notwithstanding this, the presence of uncharacteristic development in the Parish should not justify to further erode the locally characteristic structure of the village and its pattern of development.

7.16. WPC considers that the proposed development would have a negative impact on landscape, failing to contribute towards local character and distinctiveness through high quality design and causing harm to the established settlement pattern and character of the area. Consequently, the proposal is contrary to policy 5 of the WPNP, CONS2 of the DWSNDP, policy DM25 and DM27 of LPP2 and Core Policies 2 and 10 of the JCS.

**Green and Blue Infrastructure**

7.17. Core Policy 8 of the JCS relates to green infrastructure and it requires development to ensure that it maintains and/or manages identified green infrastructure as well as requiring development to contribute to the green infrastructure network with new green infrastructure and connections to existing green infrastructure. Importantly, it also states that development that undermines the functional integrity of the green infrastructure network should be resisted.

7.18. WPNP policy 5 (Design) also stresses the importance of trees and hedgerows as key landscape features that should be enhanced through design of new development.

7.19. Policy 6 of the WPNP relates to green infrastructure and biodiversity, seeking the protection of local assets and green spaces, including ecological networks. It also states that proposals that protect and enhance the Parish landscape's key features will be supported.

7.20. We are concerned that, whilst the proposal aims to increase the biodiversity value of the LGS, it also entails the fragmentation of existing important habitats within the site, especially hedgerows and group/line of trees that subdivide the site in parcels (as per historic field boundaries), and the Green Road and Eastern Road existing hedgerow and trees. Therefore, significant elements of the green infrastructure network will be fragmented and interrupted by the proposed development. We have counted up to 12 new breaks in/interruptions of the existing network of hedgerows and trees (as shown in the Arboricultural Assessment). These breaks could increase in the future as some of the pedestrian routes within the site do not follow desire lines and users may take alternative routes through hedgerows creating additional gaps in the green infrastructure network, further deteriorating it.




*Figure 19: Extract from FRA. Drainage features.*

7.21. Furthermore, the application is unclear about the future of the existing blue infrastructure network on site, which is formed by locally distinctive ditches along field boundaries (ordinary watercourses). These would see significant alteration due to development on each side of watercourses and also through potential culverting of the watercourses where they are interrupted by roads. We have identified 6 potential areas where the development may entail culverting these watercourses, which would have negative impacts in terms of landscape character (loss of distinctive ditches), amenity value and biodiversity value.

7.22. These changes would entail conflict with policies 5 and 6 of the WPNP, policy CONS12 of the DWSNDP, policy DM27 of the LPP2 and Core Policy 8 of the JCS.

**Trees, hedgerows and ancient woodland**

7.23. The application has been accompanied with an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Aspect Arboriculture) which provides a picture of the trees and hedgerows on site. Trees are assessed for their arboricultural value (height, trunk diameter, crown spread, life stage, physical and structural condition), but not for their environmental or ecosystem services value, including amenity, green infrastructure role, water management, microclimate regulation, cultural heritage, landscape, soils (ancient woodland), and biodiversity.

7.24. Unfortunately, as discussed earlier in this section, the design process has not been informed by the landscape evidence, in this case the arboricultural assessment, as this document states that "*where tree loss cannot be avoided for design reasons...*". This suggests that the tree report has not determined developable areas, quantum of development, access and layout design, but the other way around. The arboricultural evidence is relatively positively written and identifies limited tree loss due to the nature of the site which is arable and pasture fields clear of trees within, with trees only found on the edges along field boundaries.

7.25. Had the tree evidence played an important role in the design process and been read together with other landscape evidence, it would have simply avoided development on the southwest parcels (A, B, C and D), reducing tree loss to the bare minimum and avoiding the interruption of hedgerow connectivity (1 lost section instead of 9 hedgerow sections lost).

7.26. The development's location near ancient woodland is concerning as, regardless of the proposed distance between developable areas and the proposed planting as buffer to the ancient woodland, there are no obstacles to impede access and activity affecting the woodland. We are concerned that the proposed development will increase the pressure of human and pet activity on one of the most valued habitats in the area, and this pressure would happen regardless of the 30-metre buffer from the woodland to new buildings. The proposed mitigation works around the provision of sufficient planting to create protection between the development and the woodland, thus not inviting or discouraging access to the ancient woodland. Unfortunately, planting changes with time and, in the absence of appropriate management, as mentioned above with regards to hedgerows, informal routes could be created in the future in the absence of a more definitive solution. Finally, it is also concerning that pets would have free and permeable access into the woodland and they could lead to negative impacts on the habitat value of the ancient woodland which needs to be assessed.

7.27. In light of the above, WPC is concerned that the proposed development is not sufficiently landscape-led and that there is an inappropriate amount of hedgerow and tree loss as result of the proposed developable areas south of parcel E. Furthermore, more certainty of avoidance of harm to the adjacent ancient woodland should be provided. Consequently, the development currently conflicts with Core Policies 8 and 10 of the JCS, Policies DM24 and DM27 of the LPP2, Policy CONS9 of the DWSNDP and WPNP Policy 6.

**Rural roads and heritage**

7.28. Green Road provides a well-defined edge to the LGS on its northern boundary and as the LGS policy 7 supporting text states, it is the only truly rural break in the ribbon development, which stretches from the B2112 to the Mormon Meeting House in North Common Road. Green Road has a clear verdant character along the LGS thanks to the well-established and continuous hedgerow.

7.29. The proposed development, particularly the changes to Green Road by reason of the new vehicular and pedestrian accesses, which are highway-led and not context-led, would cause an impact to the rural character of the road, as well as the setting of Jenners (Grade II Listed Building). The area (application site access and its setting) is currently highly rural in character, as it is surrounded by farmland to the north and south, except for Green Road, which is the main road in the area. Notwithstanding this, the road is rural in character, being relatively narrow (as it was narrowed approximately 10 years ago) and defined by hedgerows on its sides. Therefore, WPC would be concerned that the proposed accesses and breaks in the

hedgerows would interrupt the well-defined edge of the LGS and negatively contribute to the only truly rural break in the ribbon development by introducing a suburban highway access. The negative impact is further exacerbated when reviewing the dimensions of the vehicular access: 6 metres-wide bell-mouth access and two 2 metres-wide footways on each side, measuring a total of a 10 metres wide access point, which, read together with the lack of hedgerow and suburban kerbs and traffic signs (as suggested in the Transport Assessment), tarmac and other materials would detract from the rural character of the historic road, its street scene and the LGS.




*Figure 20: Historic map of the area. Map surveyed between 1873 to 1874 and published in 1879. Source: National Library of Scotland.*



*Figure 21: Eastern Road seen from the south-west curve, near the proposed access to the application site. Source: Google Streetview.*

7.30. It is also worth highlighting that Eastern and Green Road are historic roads that are visible in historic maps and that their route and alignment have remained through time until today, with very few alterations to their character, except for Green Road's footway.

7.31. The proposed footway on Eastern Road, whilst beneficial for pedestrians, would lead to a significant negative impact on local landscape character. The proposed 2-metre-wide footway and kerb would have a suburbanising effect on what currently is a highly rural road with no pavement on the sides and a strong verdant character defined by the grass verges on both sides and the absence of highways standard features, such as kerbs, markings, lighting, signage, etc. The absence of these features typical from suburban development and the existing greenery and informal character of the road contribute to the existing rural character of Eastern Road and its street scene, which becomes stronger further south and closer to the site. Unfortunately, the proposed development would significantly erode this character.

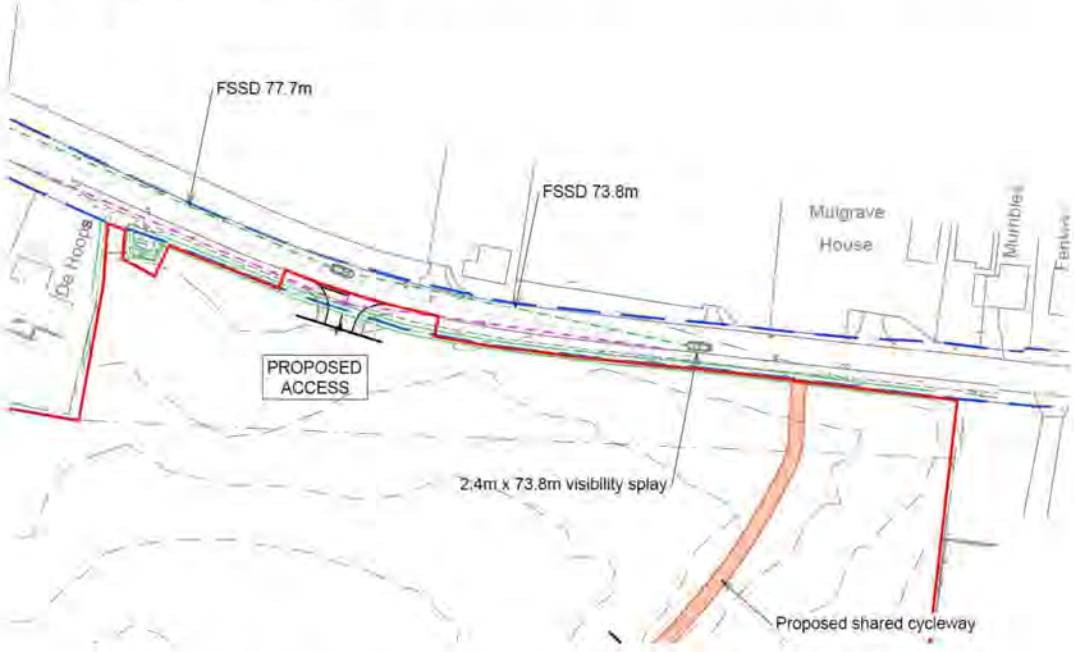



*Figure 22: Plan showing the two access points from Green Road.*

7.32. Additionally, a 3m wide footway/cycleway access is proposed, which would likely be accompanied with additional hedgerow removal for visibility as well as a safety standard fence aligned with the carriageway to prevent cyclists and pedestrians from stepping out onto the road.

7.33. For the reasons highlighted above, WPC is concerned with the negative impact on landscape character, in particular with the rural road character being lost by reason of the proposed accesses and infrastructure. We consider these works to be contrary to policies 5 and 7 of the WPNP and DM27 of LPP2.

## Topography, geology and water

7.34. The D&AS explains that the development positively responds to the site's topography, dictating the location of SuDS features, being located towards the lowest parts of the site. Notwithstanding this, we consider that the proposed SuDS features are uncharacteristic and they do not respond to local context. The site is characterised by linear water courses forming field boundaries and some shallow small ponds can be found in the vicinity (ancient woodland and residential gardens) however the proposal includes large basins that are out of character.

7.35. The proposed basins and swales are of a size and form that do not respond to local context, clearly not responding to contours, as they would be of a different shape and size otherwise. The positive precedent in the area are ditches along field boundaries but these are being culverted in areas and other SuDS features (see proposed basins and swales) are of an excessive size to reflect any local positive precedent. These will fail to contribute to a sense of place, contrary to the D&AS claims. Whether they contribute to biodiversity will also depend on final design details.

7.36. We are also concerned with the proposed SuDS strategy, as the Site Investigation Report states that infiltration is likely unviable as the clay ground conditions indicate poor infiltration and infiltration will not be a viable form of surface water drainage on site.



*Figure 23: Plan extract from the Conceptual Drainage Strategy showing in red/orange a 5-metre watercourse easement and in light blue the proposed swales and basins.*

7.37. The conceptual drainage strategy design includes a series of watercourse easements of 5 metres in width which are not justified in the submitted Drainage Report and we cannot understand what they are aimed to do. Further clarification about the potential drainage design, based on sufficient evidence, including winter infiltration tests, should be provided to ensure that the proposed drainage designs (and layout design) are feasible and realistic. We also request the Applicant to consider designing SuDS features that positively respond to the local character (not 'anywhere' development basins) that contribute to placemaking and maximise opportunities for amenity and biodiversity, not only for water storage.

7.38. WPC also raises concerns with the only vehicular access to the site being located in an area that is within a high-risk area in terms of the likelihood of flooding from surface water. This could lead to safety problems were an emergency to arise and the only access point was flooded.

# 8. Community involvement

8.1. LDC advised the Applicant to carry out a comprehensive consultation exercise and provide evidence at application stage of the details of engagement in Wivelsfield Parish. Engaging with the local community is very much supported and encouraged in the planning system and by WPC, in line with the NPPF, which states that effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process is essential for achieving high quality buildings and places.

8.2. The application, whilst outline and referring to principle and access only, seeks to secure a masterplan (as recommended at pre-application stage by LDC) which should be later developed at the reserved matters stage dealing with layout, appearance and landscaping. Notwithstanding this, WPC is surprised by the lack of sufficient and effective engagement with the local community in the design process. NPPF paragraph 134 states that regardless of who prepares design guides and codes, these should be based on effective community engagement. The engagement for design codes and guides should also be applicable in this case where the proposal includes a masterplan and framework for the design of a large development.

8.3. Moreover, paragraph 137 of the NPPF states the following:

> *"Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. Applicants should, where applicable, provide sufficient information to demonstrate how their proposals will meet the design expectations set out in local and national policy, and should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take*

*account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot. "*

8.4. WPC is concerned that the submitted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is not able to demonstrate an effective and productive engagement that helped the Applicant in the consideration of the development in principle and the preparation of a detailed development proposal. Unfortunately, the engagement described in the SCI seems like a mere formality for the Applicant and not a convincing process to listen and understand the concerns of the local community.

8.5. The SCI refers occasionally to the lack of cooperation by WPC and other parties with regards to holding in-person consultation events and other types of engagement. However, the SCI does not mention that the level of local opposition to the principle of development was so significant that the local community would not have supported being involved in a biased consultation that would be a tick-box exercise to support a future application for an unacceptable and unplanned development contrary to the Development Plan and with the local community's opposition. The nature of this as a tick-box exercise and lack of actual effective engagement is evidenced by the timings of the consultation relative to the submission of the application and the lack of questions within the consultation on whether the principle of development is supported.

8.6. The only engagement from the Applicant with residents of Wivelsfield Green took place once the development proposal was very advanced in the process, impeding an effective input of the community on critical matters such as location, quantum of development, developable areas and design. The evidence of this is that the Applicant only consulted with residents once a pre-application enquiry had been submitted, discussed and advice given by LDC. A pre-application enquiry that was not open to the public for consultation and which WPC did not have any opportunity to review and comment on. Therefore, WPC considers that, whilst some degree of public consultation was undertaken by the Applicant, this was late in the process and only a 'tick box exercise' prior to the submission of the planning application.

8.7. The SCI says that the Applicant aimed to hold a hybrid public consultation, including two in-person public exhibition events. But booking in advance was required and in light of insufficient venues and bookings, the exhibition was held online only. In our view, this demonstrates the little interest by the Applicant in actively engaging with the local community to explain their proposals, and more importantly, to listen to the local community on their view as to whether the development should take place or not.

8.8. The engagement exercise (as described in the SCI) has many limitations. For instance, it was mainly an online and mail engagement, not through in person events (in the hall or key locations/facilities in Wivelsfield), street pop-up event or

through displays, which is problematic for reaching out people of all ages. Children and young people together with older people were at a disadvantage.

8.9. The engagement work followed an approach that was misleading and was biased towards the Applicant's interest. Some of the questions and results (from the forms and survey) seem to support the scheme and look favourably upon the proposals. However, these included views from respondents that do not live in Wivelsfield Green or even the surrounding area. The style of questions was also biased in favour of the developer and did not address factors that are important to the community. Questions were lacking, for example, with regards to the principle of development and quantum. There was also a lack of explanation of some of the most realistic and negative aspects of the proposal: lack of public transport, facilities, services, impact on landscape, etc. There are questions that are phrased in a way that make the public understand that the development would bring positive assets resulting in relatively positive responses, but when the question becomes more direct about the principle of development (see question 6 below), the majority of the respondents do not support the approach to the development. Only 21% of the very few respondents (24 people) supported the approach for developing the site.

**Q6. Do you support the overall approach shown for developing the site?**

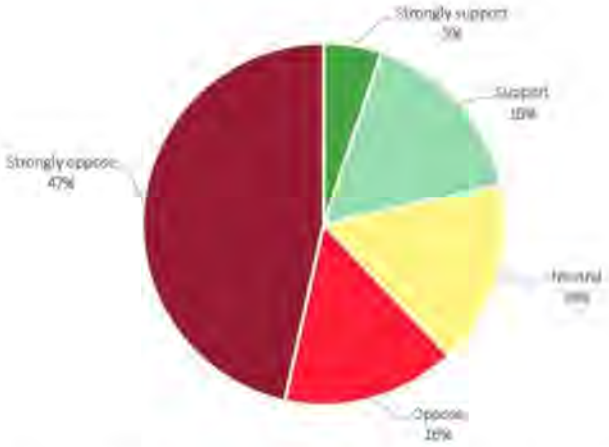



*Figure 24: Extract from the SCI feedback analysis.*

8.10. Obviously, question 6's responses do not create a sufficient picture of the local community's views on the development, but the ongoing planning application public consultation is and the vast majority of the enormous amount of public responses object to the development. The vast majority of objectors to the development online (public access website) is a more accurate response to the unbiased consultation exercise that LDC is carrying out, contrary to the engagement described in the SCI, which WPC considers flawed and ineffective.

8.11. To conclude, WPC considers that the engagement of the Applicant (and LDC) before the submission of this planning application was deficient. WPC was not

consulted on the pre-application process in 2024, even though the proposed development was radically contrary to the WPNP and the wider Development Plan. The only consultation by the Applicant was limited to remote (letters, online and telephone) systems, with no direct engagement in person, and some with questionnaires with biased questions, reducing opportunities to reach the diverse range of residents in Wivelsfield. Furthermore, consultations took place very late in the process of developing a proposal, just before the submission of the planning application, evidencing the little (if any) opportunity that the public had to influence whether the development would be appropriate in principle and the detail of proposals.

# 9. Conclusion

9.1. WPC is concerned that the principle of development is being looked upon favourably and therefore we have made an exhaustive assessment of the principle of development against the Development Plan and the NPPF, including the test with regards to the presumption in favour of sustainable development. We have concluded that this development should not be supported in principle due to the lack of compliance with the spatial strategy in the adopted Development Plan and the emerging Lewes District Local Plan.

9.2. Furthermore, we have raised very serious concerns with regard to the sustainability of the development and its location and in particular the accessibility problems of the 150 new homes should this application be approved.

9.3. Moreover, a series of concerns regarding the design arise when examining the scheme in detail. We have concluded that the design (including quantum of development) is not supported by landscape (contextual) evidence and that the scheme is not compliant with the relevant design, landscape and natural environment policies in the Development Plan and fails to address the concerns raised at pre-application.

9.4. In the absence of meaningful and effective engagement from the Applicant with the local community, we are concerned that the proposal hides the fact that the development is not supported by the community.

9.5. For the reasons explained in our representations, **WPC objects to this planning application**. Whilst we are supportive of the provision of much-needed housing in the District, it should be through the implementation of a development plan, according to a sustainable spatial strategy and, in the right and most sustainable location, where harm is avoided and minimised, and enhancements for the local community and the environment maximised.

9.6. We would be pleased to provide any required clarification and to participate in any discussions with LDC and the Applicant.

# Appendix 1

## New homes built, granted permission or planned during the period of Local Plan Part 1.

**Developments in Wivelsfield Green:**

| Planning Ref. | Address | No of New Dwellings |
|---|---|---|
| | **Dwellings already built/approved** | |
| LW/09/1323 (approved Jan 2010) | Land Adj to Coldharbour Farm, Hundred Acre Lane (now Shepherds Close) | 14 |
| LW/13/0720 | Land Adjoining North Common Road (now Charters Gate Way) | 75 |
| LW/15/0621 | Gyllyndune, South Road | 2 |
| LW/18/0437 | Land North of Coldharbour Farmhouse | 2 |
| LW/18/0533 | Clearview, Nursery Lane | 1 |
| LW/19/0628 | Unit 1,Home Farm, Slugwash Lane | 1 |
| LW/19/0629 | Unit 2, Home Farm, Slugwash Lane | 1 |
| LW/19/0657 | Uplea, Green Road | 1 |
| LW/20/0165 | Moors Cottage, Slugwash Lane | 1 |
| LW/20/0696 | Somerset House, Green Road | 14 |
| LW/20/0787 | 2 Green Road | 1 |
| | Total additional dwellings already built in Wivelsfield Green | **113** |
| | **Further applications recently approved** | |
| LW/21/0437 | Winters Farm, North Common Road | 1 |
| LW/21/0988 | Former Travis Perkins site | 6 |
| LW/21/0754/ LW/23/0288 | Land Opposite South Cottage, South Road | 45 |
| LW/21/0729/ LW/24/0178 | Land East of Ditchling Road | 96 |
| LW/21/0867 | Springfield Industrial Estate | 30 |
| LW/22/0091 | Unit 3, Home Farm, Slugwash Lane | 1 |
| LW/20/0133 | Land East of Tillershaw | 4 |
| LW/23/0631 | Land Adjacent to Moors Cottage, Slugwash Lane | 2 |
| | Total dwellings recently approved | **185** |
| | **Total increase in housing numbers for the settlement of Wivelsfield Green since 2011** | **298** |

NB these figures purely relate to the settlement (service village) of Wivelsfield Green, and do not reflect the even more intensive development which has taken place in other parts of the Parish, which account for the bulk of the increase in housing numbers to date from 758

in 2011, to 1237 as at October 2023 (an overall increase of 479 dwellings, which does not take into account the recently approved additional 185 homes shown above).

As of Feb 2025, there is a further proposed development in Wivelsfield Green, waiting to be heard at appeal: LW/23/0532 – Site north of Slugwash Gardens, Slugwash Lane (6 dwellings).

**Developments in the West of the Parish:**

| Planning Ref. | Address | No of New Dwellings |
|---|---|---|
| | **Dwellings already built/approved** | (Net) |
| LW/14/0350 | Sunnybrae, Valebridge Road (29, but with demolition of Sunnybrae & Medway Gardens) | 27 |
| LW/18/0566 | Nuggets, Valebridge Road (24 but with 2 demolished to make way) | 22 |
| LW/17/0826<br>LW/16/1040 | Land To The Rear Of The Rosery, Valebridge Road (55 but demolition of the Rosery) | 54 |
| LW/24/0428 | Chideok Valebridge Road | 2 |
| LW/07/0732 | Land off Theobalds Road<br>(NB this was before the current plan period, so is included just for reference) | 72 |

**Developments in the North of the Parish:**

| Planning Ref. | Address | No of New Dwellings |
|---|---|---|
| | **Dwellings already built/approved** | (Net) |
| LW/13/0147<br>LW/15/0060 | Land at Ridgeway | 62 |
| LW/16/0057 | Land South of Greenhill Way | 113 |