Agenda Item 9e – Rother District Council Local Plan

The Council previously considered the draft Rother District Council Local Plan in March 2026. At that stage it was an informal consultation that sought comments and representations of a general nature. The Council submitted the following comments relating to the Overall Development Strategy and Site Allocations:

1. **ID:** 30136
Type: Support
Document: Rother Local Plan 2025-2042 – Development Strategy and Site Allocations
Section: Q8
Comment: Whilst generally supporting the Overall Development Strategy, concern remains for adequate protection of the High Weald National Landscape. The NPPF confirms that major development in National Landscapes should only be permitted in exceptional circumstances. This draft states 'the need for housing, including affordable housing in sustainable locations, within the district could potentially be an exceptional circumstance that could allow for a major development within the HWNL". This opens the door for inappropriate large-scale building in rural areas. Development in and around villages should be limited to small clusters of sensitively-designed, social and affordable housing for young families, together with small units for the elderly. The aim should be the viability of multi-generational village communities.

2. **ID:** 30124
Type: Object
Document: Rother Local Plan 2025-2042 – Development Strategy and Site Allocations
Section: Q64
Comment: GYP4: Retrospective, temporary permission was granted for this site solely on the basis that the short-term needs of the residents should be met. The site is not in a sustainable location and contravenes numerous policies relating to development within the High Weald National Landscape (HWNL). Rother District Council commented in relation to the RR/2025/1015/P application "The residential use of this site is not considered suitable on a permanent basis in this location due to harm it causes to the landscape and the scenic beauty of the HWNL."

The current Regulation 19 Consultation **only seeks formal representations on whether the Local Plan is legally compliant and sound**. If the Council resolves to make a representation it must focus on legal compliance. The following questions might help you in your considerations:

- Legal compliance: Has the plan been prepared in accordance with statutory planning regulations, the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS), and the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)? Has the Sustainability Appraisal been carried out correctly?
- Soundness: Does the Plan meet the four soundness tests set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, particularly:
- Positively prepared: Does the plan provide a strategy that meets objectively assessed needs?
- Justified: Is the strategy an appropriate one, taking into account reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate and robust evidence?

- Effective: Are the policies deliverable over the plan period?
- Consistent with National Policy: Does the plan align with the National Planning Policy Framework?

Full details of the plan can be found at www.rother.gov.uk/draftlocalplan2026

Please note site GYP4 from March has now become GYP3 (the proposed gypsy and traveller site at Netherfield Hill). Otherwise the proposal is unchanged.

With regards the Council's previous comment relating to development within the High Weald National Landscape, this is still proposed.

2.43 The Local Plan has been prepared having regard to the legislative and policy framework for National Landscapes, together with the High Weald AONB Management Plan. The spatial strategy responds to these by seeking to focus development away from it. However, given the significant identified needs for housing and other types of development in the district over the plan-period, as well as the need to secure the long-term viability and sustainability of settlements within it, it is necessary make provisions for a limited amount of new development in this area. Site allocation policies are included in the Local Plan which help give effect to the spatial strategy. Allocations within the HWNL have been subject to rigorous assessments, considering their impact on the National Landscape, and include detailed requirements to ensure new development on them is appropriate. Whilst acknowledging that ***there are a small number of site allocations that will constitute major development in the HWNL, it is considered appropriate to include them in the context of meeting identified local housing needs.***