

Hamsey PC's response to 'call for sites' submission 19HY (land North East of Railway line, either side of Hamsey Lane)-

1. Hamsey PC's comments on the sites related to this submission (11HY and 13HY) are reproduced below, and in particular the PC commented :

'Totally out of the question. As ever, this would completely change the view and feel of Cooksbridge. Landscape would be ruined '(13HY)

'Would significantly erode the gap between Cooksbridge and Old Cooksbridge, thus eroding one of they key characteristics of the parish (the collection of separate communities, Hamsey, Offham, Cooksbridge, Old Cooksbridge, Bevernbridge). The scale would not be relative to the size of Cooksbridge, impacting the community beyond recognition.' (11HY)

2. The new site (19HY) is of an astronomically greater scale than these already devastating proposals, and while the previous comments have some relevance, they do not begin to describe the impact of the new site on the community. Development of 19HY would utterly overwhelm the community and change it from an intimate village where residents are often familiar with one another to a small town where existing residents would feel estranged. This would be a visceral body blow to a largely happy community that enjoys a rural setting, good access to the Downs, beautiful countryside, local wildlife in abundance and neighbourly community spirit.
3. We are happy to share this privilege with visitors, who come in numbers to visit the Downs, walk the local footpaths and ride bikes along our local lanes, and the loss would be as great for them as for local people. Whereas the previous concern with the smaller sites was coalescence of Cooksbridge and Old Cooksbridge, contrary to the key parish characteristics of 5 distinct settlements, this proposal would wipe out the distinction between Old Cooksbridge, Cooksbridge, Old Hamsey and even Offham. Of the five settlements, only Bevernbridge would not be directly affected.
4. 'Factual information' is requested on this site to assist the 'call for sites' process, and it is appreciated that broader assessment of the site will take place at the site selection stage. However, the Parish Council commented on the 'Issues and Options' consultation that the approach to site selection should be subject to an overall strategy, rather than being a consequence of the sites being promoted through the call for sites process. We also commented that 'The current settlement framework should be used as the basis for considering growth, as likely to lead to less traumatic outcomes in the rural area, and greater consistency with 174 (b) of the NPPF (recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.' Cooksbridge is not identified as a key settlement in the current settlement hierarchy, reflecting its small size, lack of facilities and general unsuitability as a focus for major development, so this would have precluded consideration of 19HY for development.
5. It is a matter of fact that 1,100 dwellings attached to Cooksbridge would massively overwhelm the village. A complete reassessment would have to be made of all facilities – schools, surgeries, roads, station car parking, shops, recreational facilities, and the local community would thereby be turned upside down. We have invested heavily in local facilities, particularly at Beechwood Rec, where a careful balance is

being maintained between providing good facilities for all and maintaining the rural environment. Beechwood Hall and Rec are popular venues for celebrations and weddings, where visitors from far afield come to enjoy the rural setting. This would inevitably be prejudiced by so drastically increasing the size of the village in such a brutal manner.

6. We have neither the time nor the resources to provide detailed assessments of the site to understand the full implications of development. The fields are highly valued as tranquil areas, heavily interlaced with well-used footpaths, widely accessible from existing housing in the village, and from the station and bus stops, so to visitors from the wider area. Wildlife diversity is abundant, hedgerows are a rich source of herbs, berries and fruit and the fields are known as a rich source of fossils. Given time, more detailed evidence of biodiversity and heritage assets could undoubtedly be provided. Parts of the sites under question are known to be subject to flooding.
7. We fully expect that many of the arguments will employ about the negative environmental impact of development on this scale will be met by the argument that large scale development can be subject to full mitigation to ameliorate impact. This will be claimed for biodiversity, carbon footprint, water use and pollution, traffic generation, energy use and so-on. The track record of development of all scales just does not bear this out. Whatever is included in the initial proposals will inevitably be watered down as the development programme progresses. In the case of larger schemes, the long build-out timescale provides opportunities for developers to repeatedly return to promised mitigation measures and water them down as circumstances, such as unforeseen costs, or fluctuations in the market occur. They will be supported in this by the NPPF, which provides that costs to development must be limited to ensure that development is viable. We are profoundly sceptical of the 10% Net Biodiversity Gain promulgated by government, as if the best way to increase biodiversity is to build more houses all over green fields and ancient hedgerows! We will therefore, with full justification, approach our assessment of the development with the assumption that it will cause substantial environmental damage notwithstanding claims of mitigation.
8. University of Exeter Centre for Sustainable energy data enables parish-level carbon footprints to be compared to the national average, and Hamsey has a significantly higher footprint (37.4 CO₂e) compared to the national average (13.7t CO₂e). (see <https://impact-tool.org.uk/footprint/compare?parishId=E04003774&footprintType=territorial&scale=per-household&comparisonGeography=national>). Housing on the proposed scale would undoubtedly increase this, contrary to the Lewes District Council corporate objectives to reduce carbon emissions.
9. We understand that the traffic lights at the Lewes Prison cross roads is already at capacity, with no options for increasing capacity. Cooksbridge level crossing already causes significant delays to traffic on the A275. Some increased traffic on the A275 is inevitable but concentrating large scale development at Cooksbridge is bound to exacerbate this congestion. The capacity of the prison cross roads was a key issue in limiting the development potential in Lewes District at the previous Local Plan enquiry. Nothing has changed to improve the situation, and traffic has continued to grow, so this must remain a critical constraint.

10. The Ouse is already really under massive pressure and does not at all meet national standards. We are seeing regular sewage dumps by Southern Water in the sea just downstream, and the river is of course tidal. Ecologically it's a nightmare. 1100 new homes means more than 300 tonnes of sewage per day.
11. Development of 19HY would significantly and detrimentally impact on National Park, both directly and indirectly. Direct adverse impact would arise from environmental impact (eg air quality), wildlife impact (loss of continuous habitat across NP boundary) landscape impact (views both into and from the National Park across the site), 'dark skies' impact and many others. These adverse impacts are detrimental in their own terms, but collectively would also urbanise the setting of the National Park significantly and detrimentally. The 1995 environment act requires this to be taken into account in decision making, as it would be contrary to the national park principles of conserving and enhancing the natural and cultural heritage of the national park.
12. While the railway line provides a clear and well-defined boundary for the National Park, it is also an extremely arbitrary boundary, in that the continuum of landscape across the path of the railway would otherwise have suggested little difference in landscape quality. A 'before' and 'after' comparison of looking or traversing from the national park over the boundary into site 19HY would identify the development of 19HY as a brutal interruption in the rural setting of the national park without justification in terms of comparative landscape or natural heritage quality.
13. The cherished and sensitive views to and from Hamsey Church, which is within the NP would also be detrimentally compromised by development of 19HY. The fragile context of the church is already under threat from development in Lewes such as Old Malling Farm, and further encroachment towards the church from the north would further erode its setting – recognised by many film producers as a quintessentially English traditional rural church setting.
14. Secondary impacts on the national park would also be significant and detrimental. While traffic to the site locally would have a major adverse impact in its own right, the proposal would inevitably draw heavy traffic along the A275 from Lewes via Offham, an attractive and narrow sinuous road winding through woodland and an SSSI, which cannot be widened, and is already often congested and slow due to cyclists, tractors and other rural and recreational road users. The increased traffic and congestion would be detrimental to the area of itself, but it would also cause environmental damage through pollution and air quality in the SSSI. Clearly, some traffic growth would be inevitable regardless of the location of new development, but site 19HY would be likely to cause particularly acute adverse environmental impact in these terms.
15. In its submissions on the 'issues and options' consultation, HPC commented that local narrow lanes should be identified for their amenity, environmental and heritage benefit, and protected from further development, and from indirect traffic generation where possible. Hamsey Lane and the Drove are identified accordingly. This proposal would be directly opposed to this objective, turning these lanes from attractive narrow country lanes with rich hedgerows prolific with wildlife, birds and berries, into

anonymous urban throughfares. This would be an unforgivable loss of archetypical local heritage.

16. Development of this scale in a rural area with limited road infrastructure would inevitably cause disturbance to local livestock farmers, continuing after the development phase with increased urban trespass and nuisance at the new and intensified urban fringe.
17. Should the call for sites assessment lead to this site being further considered, HPC would wish to revisit these considerations, with the benefit of such further information as would come to light through the assessment process. There is little doubt that such evidence would further demonstrate the overwhelmingly negative impact of the development of 19HY. This inevitability is such that it is questionable whether the resources for further scrutiny are justified. HPC is resolved to oppose these cynical, heartless proposals.

Hamsey PC

October 2021

Appendix : HPC's previous 'call for sites' responses on related sites

1. 11HY: Currently under water on West side- see flooded field which forms each winter. Pic attached of Little egret, photographed by resident on 8/3/21
Totally out of the question. As ever, this would completely change the view and feel of Cooksbridge. Landscape would be ruined.



11HY would significantly erode the gap between Cooksbridge and Old Cooksbridge, thus eroding one of the key characteristics of the parish (the collection of separate communities, Hamsey, Offham, Cooksbridge, Old Cooksbridge, Bevernbridge).

The scale would not be relative to the size of Cooksbridge, impacting the community beyond recognition.

2. 13HY: Totally out of the question. As ever, this scale and location would completely change the view and feel of Cooksbridge. Landscape would be ruined.

This would erode the distinction between Old Cooksbridge and new Cooksbridge as separate settlements.