

Minutes of the 1st Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Village Concerns

Date and Location of AGM:	5th September 2017 19:30 East Hoathly Village Hall
Present:	Fred Carter (FC) David Dobbs (DD) Tania Freezer (TF) Katherine Gutkind (KG) Mike Hill (MH) Gill Kennedy (GK) Jonathan Walker (JW) Kate Richardson (KR) Andy Burns
Apologies:	Bill Walker

The Village Concerns Chairperson (KR) welcomed all to the AGM and explained the format of the meeting,

	1. Chair's Report (KR)
	2. Neighbourhood Plan (JW)
	3. Treasurer's Report (DD)
	4. Election of Chair (JW)
	5. Questions

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KR begins with a brief summary of events since 2015.

Autumn 2015

- Wealden District Council (WDC) produces Issues, Options and Recommendations document (IOR) which was the beginning of the process to revise the 2013 Local Plan.
 - East Hoathly (EH) slated for 190 houses (representing a 50% increase since 2013)
 - Halland slated for 30 houses (representing a 23% increase since 2013)
 - East Hoathly's description and place in the settlement hierarchy changed from limited, basic or no facilities to equate it with Uckfield, Crowborough or similar, places that are described as very accessible with good local facilities. (See Appendix 1)
 - In 2013 EH had no development boundary - this implies there will be no development.
 - At the same time WDC also put out call for land for development. Land offered was not disclosed to public, no view on whether it was suitable or not.
 - They aimed for the new Local Plan in November 2016.

May 2016

- Embryonic group of Village Concerns organised a talk by John Kay(JK) from the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE).
 - JK raised the significance of fact that while the plan implied would take place over 30 years this would be mainly completed early on in the 30 year period.
 - In the north of Wealden development had been restricted due to Ashdown Forest being both a Special Protection Area (SPA) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), it is protected under UK and EU Law, therefore the development would be concentrated towards the south in six villages, including EH.
 - Hailsham's sewage treatment works not to be completed until 2022, therefore this further limited the areas in which the development would be concentrated due to impact on Pevensey Levels another protected area.
- This talk made clear that WDC had no up to date plan and also was the first time that the issue of "five year land supply" was raised and that WDC did not have one. This meant it was open season for developers.
- This would mean that any planning proposal that went to the planning committee would be approved as the lack of five year land supply would lead to appeals being upheld and significant costs incurred.

June 2016

- FOI request submitted asking what land had been offered by local land owners for potential development. It became clear that a huge amount of land had been offered in both East Hoathly and Halland. (See Appendix 2)
- In East Hoathly 2 houses proposed in Buttsfield Lane

August 2016

- Parker Dann on behalf of Hesmonds advertised public consultation about 211 houses
 - Village Concerns leafleted to raise awareness and there was a good turnout at the event.
 - There was a clear ignorance and disregard from organisers about the size of village and the local businesses and employment opportunities. For example Parker Dann were not aware village didn't have a gas supply and suggested that the Village Hairdressers could be a major employer.
 - Clear assumption the 211 houses planning permission would just go through.
 - A representative of the Bradford family also attended with outline plans for a further 140 houses on land at South Street. (See Appendix 3)

- In Halland public consultation was held, by Jim Richardson, for 30 houses in Bramble Bank.

- This intense period of activity meant that the Village Concerns Steering Group was formally established.

September 2016

- 2 houses for Buttsfield Lane went in for planning permission

October 2016

- VC held a public meeting and it was agreed to start fundraising for a planning consultant and barrister.
- Aim to work on government level, local authority level, local resident level and Parish Council.
- Started petition to forward to Wealden District Council, gathering signatures house to house and online - presented to full council on November 23rd 2016.
- [Radio interview with Nus Ghani](#)
- Nus Ghani eventually visited the village and the proposed sites. (See Appendix 3)
- Started a [blog/website](#) to keep up to date with events and information
- Organised press releases ([Example](#))
- Banner held by volunteers at the corner of the High Street
- Data collection on infrastructure
 - Sewage
 - Schools
 - Drainage
 - Traffic surveys
 - Consulted GP surgery
 - Environment
 - Wildlife
 - Hedgerows
 - Ancient woodland
 - Trees in area
- Worked with local groups such as [CPRE](#) and SWOT (Save Wealden from Overdevelopment Threat), [Woodlands Trust](#), [Sussex Wildlife](#), [Rambles](#), [Sussex Amphibian and Reptile Group](#).
- Overall aim was to be as informed as we could be about the actual position in order to challenge misinformation.
- Found it difficult to find a local barrister or planning consultant . All involved with local campaigns or other developers, hence a conflict of interest. Eventually settled on Rebecca Lord (Planning Consultant) who had previously worked with Joe Cannon (Barrister).

November 2016

- Draft local plan not issued as previously promised and was formally deferred until the start of 2017.

December 2016

- 1st December application for 30 houses for Bramble Bank in Halland went in to WDC.
- 9th December, hybrid application for Hesmonds, 205 Houses outline planning permission and Equestrian Development and House on Ailies Lane.
 - VC Employed Planning Consultant to look at documents around the implications of a hybrid application.
 - VC Employed barrister to challenge the 5 year land supply. Submitted formal objection to WDC on behalf of Village Concerns.
 - VC also made contact with an Environment Solicitor for potential future work and objections.

January/February 2017

- Village Concerns concentrated their efforts on getting objections, total of more than 250.
- In addition Village Concerns Steering Committee made a very detailed objection which was printed, bound and hand delivered to all members of Planning Committee South.
 - This included a detailed objection on sustainability.
- Volunteers stood outside village shop and helped local residents with writing their objections.
- Village Concerns held a public meeting in January
- Objections were submitted by other organisations such as CPRE, Woodlands Trust, Ramblers, Sussex Amphibian and Reptile Group.
- VC commenced a Survey about Ashdown Forest – use of and travel across, providing empirical evidence of usage and travel.
- Hesmonds application due to come before Planning Committee South in February/March but no scheduled date was published.

March 2017

- The Draft Local plan for 2017 to 2028 was published on March 3
- **230** homes for East Hoathly and a **new development boundary** (See Appendix 4)
- Reclassified as Large Village Type 2. Although described as a Small Village later in the same document. There was confusion throughout. (See Appendix 5)
- It proved to be hard to get true population figures as distinct for East Hoathly and Halland.
- VC referred Draft Plan to planning consultant and wrote to WDC questioning both the lack of evidence and the obvious errors in the plan.
- Halland was still down for 30 houses and was described as an unsustainable settlement in the settlement hierarchy.
- It was stipulated Halland's homes would have 1-2 bedrooms and be in the core area with only 5 built at a time, which was quite prescriptive. (See Appendix 6)
- 13th March VC attended Planning Committee Combined meeting
 - To surprise of everyone, including the councillors, the draft plan had been changed.
 - Instead of 14,000 houses, 11,400 (7000 had already been built) leaving 4,400 to be built.
 - East Hoathly moved to **0 homes**
 - East Hoathly development boundary now redrawn very tight round existing village. (See Appendix 4)
 - For Halland the situation had remained the same.
 - Future planning meetings were cancelled.
 - Bramble Bank planning meeting was cancelled and Officer's report was removed from WDC site.

Why had this happened?

- Changes had happened due to the publication of a 3 year scientific study looking at damage caused to Ashdown Forest by Nitrogen Oxide deposits from car exhausts.
 - Damage to the heathland was far greater than anticipated to what is a protected area.
 - Previously there had only been two zones to be considered when discussing impact to Ashdown Forest.
 1. 7km zone, which includes Uckfield, 1000 homes at Ridgewood already approved. (See Appendix 7)
 2. 15km zone which includes East Hoathly and Halland.
 - This new draft plan introduced the need to consider the entire Wealden area when looking at the impact on Ashdown Forest.
- Development would be restricted across whole of WDC to reduce damage that would be done
- Also stated looking into compensatory measures
 - Mitigating measures such as tunnels and toll roads had already been considered and had been judged not viable.
 - VC think that compensatory measures might be to purchase land adjacent to the forest and turn it back into heathland. VC understand that WDC in conversation with Natural England and

the Ashdown Forest conservators about these measures.

Where are we now?

- Plans remain on file. Since then no movement on these.
- New proposed development
 - Old Hartfield for 4 houses
 - Forester's Arms conversion to 3 houses.
 - Hop Garden Halland 21 houses
- WDC has asked those who have submitted plans to wait until **30th September 2017 for decision.**
- For new developments proposals must show no impact on Ashdown Forest
 - For example - Forester's application that changes from **2 houses** and **1 pub** to **3 houses** will supposedly mean overall less movement across Ashdown Forest.
 - No reference in Old Hartfield proposal to the impact on Ashdown Forest.
- The next version of the Draft Local Plan still due to be issued, don't know when. Once published we will have a 6 week period of consultation. This will be a busy time for Village Concerns
- Land can still be put forward.

We are now in a planning pause enabling some less defensive strategies. The Parish Council are now working on a neighbourhood plan – update from JW to come.

- We are looking at identifying and registering Assets of Community Value
 - KR stated that the Parish Council applying for Assets of Community Value for the **three pubs** in the community. Diane Knill spoke from audience to state that it was only for **two**, the Blacksmiths Arms and The King's Head as the Parish Council were advised not to apply for the Forrester's Arms.
 - Community can be offered first refusal when a change of use is proposed for an Asset of Community Value.
- We should start to look at buildings, try to get them identified/protected. We should also look at trees for Tree Protection Orders (TPOs).
- How can VC and the village communities shape the development that will happen in future years?
- KR then thanked the members of the Steering Committee for their work and in particular Bill Walker for all of his work and advice.
- KR also thanked the people of the village who helped support VC activities, campaign, seek donations and write letters to WDC.
- KR closed by stating that VC are "Battle Ready" and inviting those at the meeting to join Village Concerns, using the form available at the meeting, and also explained that new members can be co-opted onto the Steering Group.

2	<p>Jonathan Walker update on Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group formed several months previous and making progress • Core of parish councillors and other local volunteers from associations and societies in the community. Open to anyone interested in getting involved. • Initial definition of Neighbourhood Plan established • Applied for grant from Locality towards the costs of Neighbourhood Plan • Group sought specialist consultant and decided on Feria Urbanism • Feria have been proposed to Parish Council • Next stage is to set up smaller working parties to address specific areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future residential development • Employment and Business • Environment and Countryside • Infrastructure • Leisure and Sport • Arts, Crafts and Tourism • Health and Wellbeing. • Further consultation with Feria following official appointment • Then wider community consultation • JW invited those present to approach Diane Knill to join if they were interested. • Diane Knill then spoke to update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant of £9000 received from Locality, funds in Parish Council bank account • Must be spent by 18th February • Feria appointed and this has been confirmed with them • DK wanted to stress the spending deadline • 3 day public consultation exercise with residents • Dates TBC • More funds have been applied for from WDC • Process is expensive • DK also stressed fact that it had to be linked to WDC' Local Plan
3	DD gave report on finances of the organisation as at September 2017 (See Appendix 8)
4	<p>In accordance with the constitution current Chair Kathryn Richardson resigned.</p> <p>Jonathan Walker asked for nominations for chair</p> <p>Kate Richardson was proposed, seconded and re-elected as chair for 2017-2018</p>

Questions from audience

Diane Knill asked for clarification around the definition of “membership” of Village Concerns. Parker Dann had challenged Parish Councillors on membership of Village Concerns.

- KR clarified no annual subscription, contribution of details at registration constitutes joining. JW added that constitution states that membership simply involves subscribing to email mailing list.
- Discussion of changing terminology. Move from member to follower? Move to use of term supporter. Discussion of definition of membership.
 - Committee to consider use of “supporter”.

Michael Evans asked about whether VC had met with owners of Hesmond’s Stud or considered doing so?

- KR said that VC had formally written to them and had no reply.
- Expressed hope that Neighbourhood Plan’s discussions would provide opportunities to talk to local land-owners.
- JW said that he also had written to the owners and not had a response.

Comment from David Burroughs (DB) that removal of signs (in bus stops and in public spaces) had led to the community feeling that the issue of these specific developments had gone away, in reality the issue is merely pending decision. Requested that more information displayed in village.

- JW expressed concern that there is no specific action that the village can be asked to do and said that concern about community fatigue meant that VC were concerned about keeping village on “high alert”.
- DB also said that he had thought the issue had gone away and was dismayed to see that it was merely dormant.
- DB expressed concern that the WDC stance on the nitrous oxide levels might change again
 - KR expressed that VC hoped that they wouldn’t.
- Another audience member also expressed concern about the development at Ridgewood.
- KR clarified that any plans that had been submitted, approved and passed before that meeting in March will go ahead, regardless of impact on Nitrous Oxide levels.
- Important to note of the 1000 homes at Ridgewood 35% were due to be affordable and this has already reduced to 15%.
 - Applications to remove affordable housing from planning permission have been seen, we need to be vigilant.
- JW suggests that big developers might be looking to challenge the Ashdown Forest report, it appeared suddenly, might be removed just as suddenly.
- JW also mentions significance of compensatory measures and how developers might evidence they are not affecting Ashdown Forest.
- KG mentioned an existing challenge to Nitrogen Dioxide levels in Oxfordshire. But the issue is on the national consciousness at the moment, especially in big cities like London. Environmental Solicitor VC are working with would be interested in challenging WDC on issue if necessary.
- KR mentioned that WDC have challenged Lewes District Council and won court case to show that building in LDC area would have a cumulative effect on Ashdown Forest.
- KG mentioned that survey will be reviewed every 5 years.

John Ormerod urged people who walk in local area to keep eyes peeled for new changes in the flora and fauna.

- KR urged people to send all such information about environment or infrastructure to Village Concerns for use in future challenges and reports.

Michael Evans asked VC about the closure of the Forrester's Arms. Do VC think it is an ACV.

- KR responded that she had thought from the Parish Council meeting that it was going to go forward as an ACV.
- Audience Member wondered if it is worth objecting, given Parker Dann had said the village had "a number" of pubs, did it make the village seem less sustainable for large development if East Hoathly and Halland only have two.
- Michael Evans responded that he did not think most of the village would hold that view.
- Audience Member mentioned previously excellent landlord.
- KR asked that discussion take place through the Chair.
- Michael Evans mentioned the decision made by Harveys and the issues cause by them owning the pub.
- KR clarified that VC had sent out the issue to the mailing list, made suggestions, KG worked to have it made into a listed building, VC suggested people write to planning office and included the addresses of two of Harveys' CEOs.
- Michael Evans pointed out the high profits made by Harveys and said that he felt that the pub is an Asset of Community Value and that as a community we should be doing out best to keep it here. Just as VC fought against the doubling in size of the village, isn't there more than could be done and getting Harveys directors here to talk to people. If you look at village Facebook page has generated lots of objections to it. ME feels that more could be done.
- KR clarified the role of VC and also mentioned that the emails about Forester's sent by VC had garnered almost no response.
- VC had worked towards getting it made into a listed building and looked at how to communicate with Harveys. Also addressed fact that other groups in the village could lead challenge to Forrester's planning proposal.
- KG clarified importance of using funds raised by VC specifically to fight overdevelopment as that was why people donated in the first place.
- KG also mentioned that members had submitted their own objections online.
- Michael Evans clarified that he wasn't looking for use of funds but that he did feel the pub was an ACV and that he was surprised that response was so low. He felt it would be great if VC could use their place to lead the campaign.
- KR said she was surprised that people don't seem to mind about the Foresters. She personally feels it is a loss and is disappointed that it isn't going through as an ACV.
- KR encouraged all to make all possible efforts to maintain and sustain the two remaining pubs in East Hoathly and Halland.
- Audience Member remarked corresponded with Hamish Elder (CEO of Harveys) and once it became clear that potential tenants from Blacksmiths HE assured audience member that all proposing tenants were not suitable. As far as Harveys were concerned there was no financial route that was acceptable to Harveys. Also remarked that at one point some village members were thinking about community purchase but a quick look at the figures had indicated that this was not possible or sustainable.
- KR drew attention to the models that do exist but there are issues with them and there needs to be a community level decision about what issues to take up.

Appendices

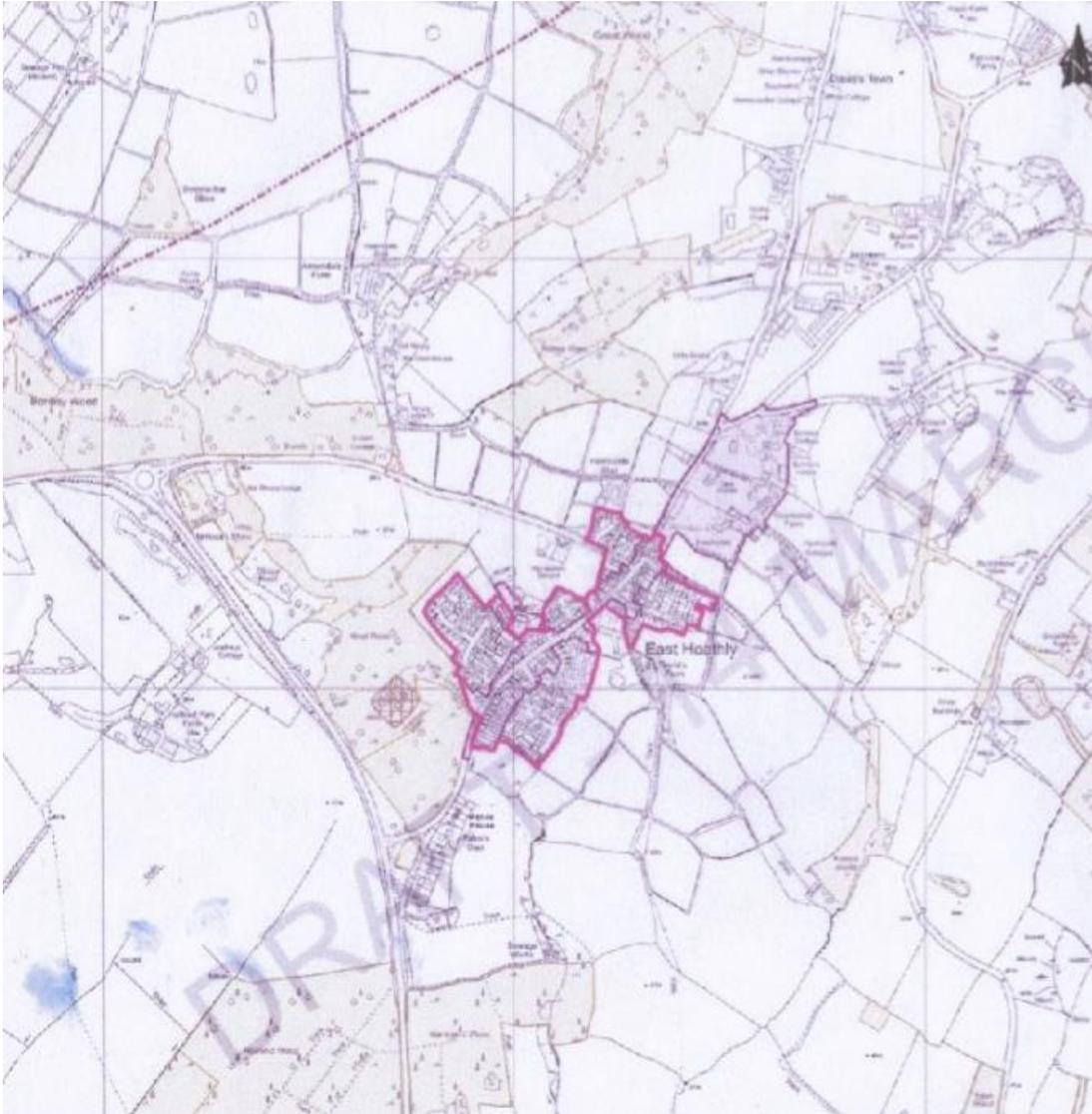
Appendix 1

November 2013		
Neighbourhood Settlement	A settlement with limited, basic or no facilities but with access to another Neighbourhood centre, or a settlement with facilities	Pevensey, East Hoathly, Maresfield, Danehill, East Dean, Five Ash Down, Broad Oak, Withyham, Fletching, Nutley, Boreham Street, Laughton, High Hurstwood, Little Horsted, Isfield, Upper Dicker, Lower Horsebridge, Hellingly, Ripe, Selmeston, Magham Down, Windmill Hill, Ruslake Green, Bells Yew Green, Mark Cross, Cross-in-Hand, Chelwood Gate
October 2015		
Sustainable Settlement	Settlement which is either very accessible with good local facilities or accessible with good local facilities	Buxted, Crowborough, East Hoathly, Forest Row, Frant, Groombridge, Hailsham, Hartfield, Heathfield, Herstmonceux, Horam, Mayfield, Ninfield, Polegate, Willingdon, Rotherfield, Stone Cross, Uckfield, Wadhurst, Westham

Appendix 3



Appendix 4

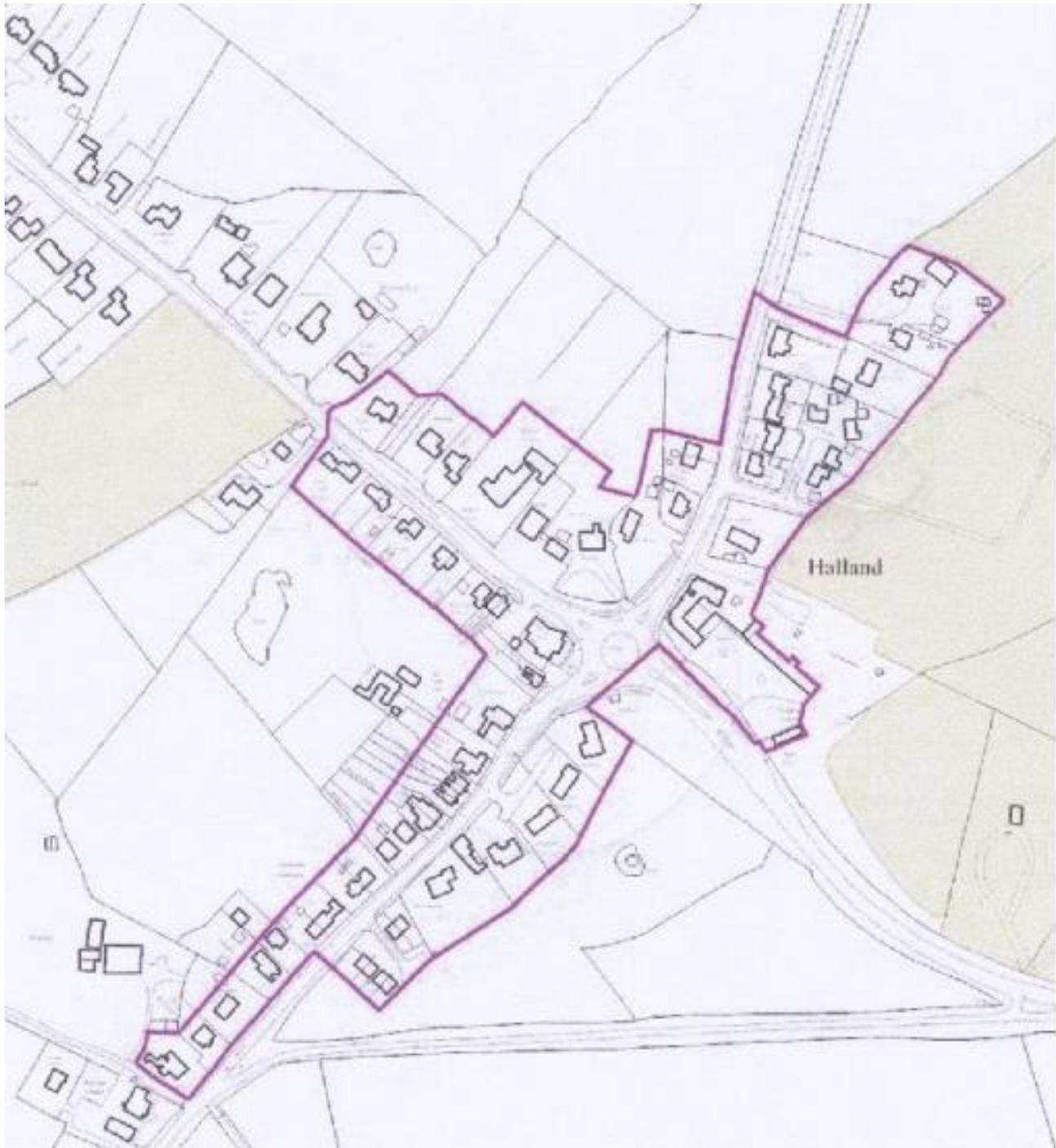


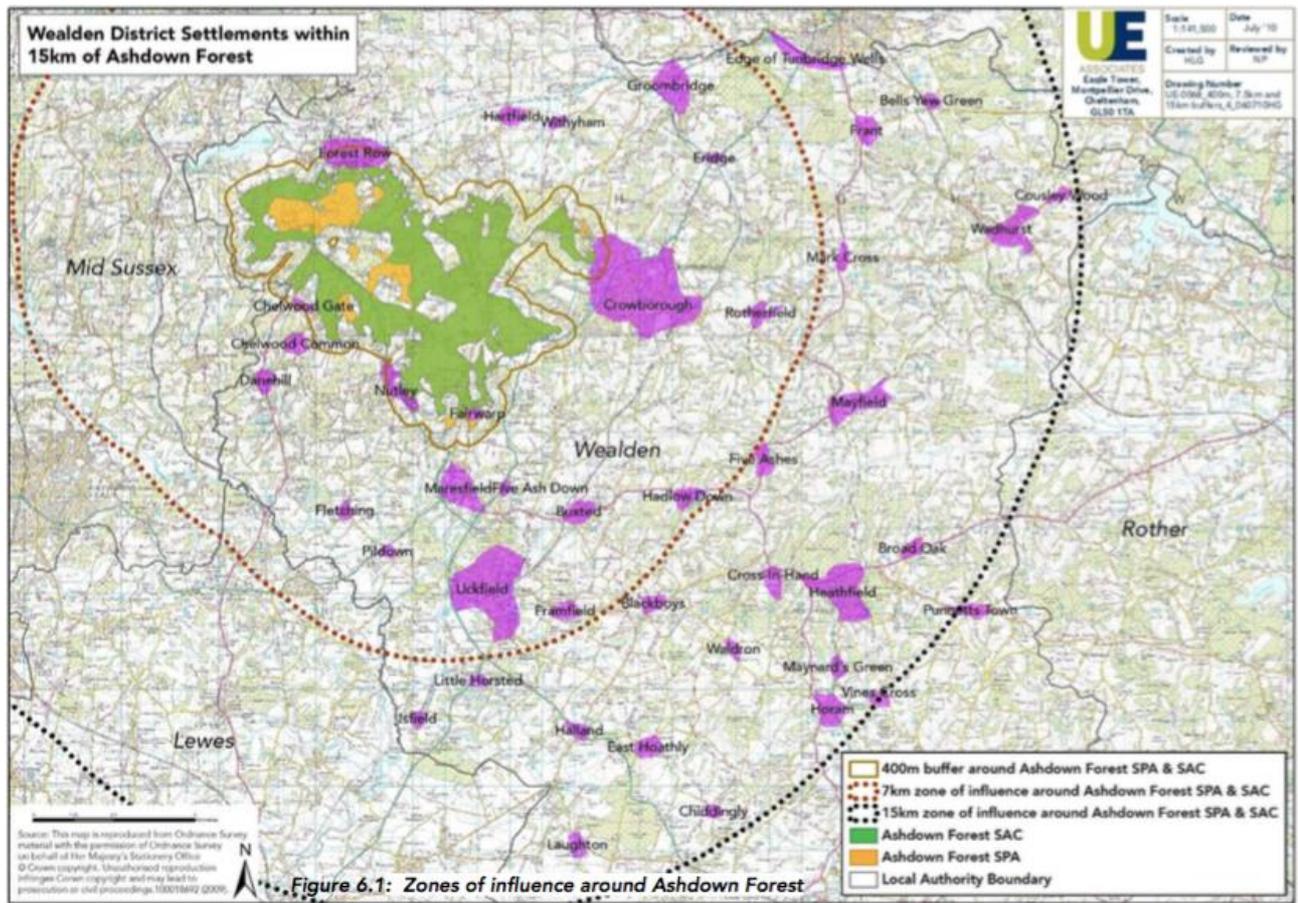
Appendix 5

Table 1 Current Settlement Hierarchy

Category of Settlement	Sustainability Category	Settlement	Description
Town	Sustainable Settlement	Hailsham, Uckfield, Crowborough, Heathfield	A District Centre for purposes of retail with good local facilities to meet the day to day needs of residents. These settlements have a wider draw of visitors from the rural hinterland to use the centre and for employment.
Urban Settlement	Sustainable Settlement	Polegate and Willingdon, Stone Cross	A settlement with very good accessibility to nearby regional centre (Eastbourne) and good local facilities but without high order shops or multiple supermarkets
Large Village – type 1	Sustainable Settlement	Forest Row; Wadhurst;	The largest villages within the District which is either very accessible by public transport with good local facilities or accessible by public transport with good local facilities
Large Village – type 2	Sustainable Settlement	Buxted; East Hoathly; Frant; Groombridge; Hartfield; Herstmonceux; Horam; Mayfield; Ninfield; Rotherfield and Westham	Settlement which is accessible with very good local facilities but relatively smaller than type 1 village
Local Settlement	Unsustainable Settlement	Bells Yew Green; Boreham Street; Chelwood Common; Chelwood Gate; Colemans Hatch; Cross-in-Hand; Danehill; Five Ash Down; Five Ashes; Framfield; Halland; Hellingly; Isfield; Little	Settlement with accessibility by public transport with local to very limited facilities

Appendix 6





Appendix 7

Appendix 8

Village Concerns Financial Report

<u>Date</u>	<u>Paid in / donations</u>	<u>Paid out</u>	<u>Recipients</u>
Village Concerns			
Nat West Bank			
Uckfield			
Nov-16	£6110	£500	Rebecca Lord, Planning Consultant
Dec-16	£755	£49.92	Southern Water, maps
Jan-17	£1759.46	£921.00	Cornerstone Barristers, Advice
		£550.00	Rebecca Lord, Planning Consultant
		£110.38	Katherine Gutkind, printing of posters and leaflets
Feb-17	£90	£420.00	Cornerstone Barristers, Objection Letter to WDC
		£36.00	Village Hall, hire
Mar-17	£75.00	£500.00	Rebecca Lord, Planning Consultant
Apr-17			
May-17			
Jun-17		£13.50	Village Hall, hire
Jul-17			
Total	£8789.46	£3100.80	
Credit balance on July 31st 2017: £5688.66			
Payment pending, September 2017: £100.08 for the Village Concerns Blog			

