



8th February 2021

To Strategic Planning

Proposed Rookwood Golf Course Development – The Local Plan

As we are all now aware, the proposal to develop Rookwood Golf Course has met with exceptionally strong public opposition, both from residents in the Forest Neighbourhood Council area, across Horsham Town and in surrounding settlements.

Lack of public knowledge and/or involvement at an earlier stage, may have resulted, rightly or wrongly, in the strongly held view that this development has been “railroaded” into the new draft District Plan. Its inclusion seems to be confirmed in the Opening Statement of Proposal 4 Rookwood Development that is now in the public domain.

Forest Neighbourhood Council will be responding in more detail to the Proposal 4 design, but the purpose of this letter is to **unequivocally ask HDC to withdraw Rookwood Golf Course Development in its entirety from the draft Local Plan**. Relative to this Statement is the fact that this land is owned by HDC, its value will not diminish and as it is now such a sensitive issue, it needs to be carefully considered without any form of time restraint.

There are too many questions which are outside the scope of a Local Plan but within strategic planning that should be answered before a non-reversible decision is made. This Council wishes the following to be taken into account:

- 1 The National Planning Policy has specific requirements that relate to development on land that was previously an open space (sports, recreational buildings). In view of recent documentation that is in public circulation, we cannot agree that the current golf usage has reached the end of its natural life. The Golf Course is fully utilised and cannot be described as “surplus to requirements”. Should the site be included, then HDC will need to publish its alternative provision including a recreational/community facility to replace the clubhouse/community centre.
- 2 The February 2021 HM Treasury Review – The Economics of Biodiversity refers to “unsustainable engagement with Nature that is endangering the prosperity of current and future generations”. Rookwood represents 33% of the green space currently available to Horsham Town residents and any reduction in this percentage is not reflecting The National Planning Policy social objective to “reflect current and future needs”.

- 3 The inclusion of Rookwood for development within the draft Local Plan negates all the aims set out in the five-year partnership between HDC “Wilder Horsham” and Sussex Wildlife Trust.
- 4 Rookwood is in an area that is already recognised as being in a flood zone as demonstrated by the flooding which occurred last year. Precautionary measures against flooding are notorious for just moving the problem elsewhere along the watercourse, leading to problems with properties which are not within the actual development. In addition, the huge development upstream North of Horsham will also impact on the river flow and flooding will then be exacerbated by the proposed Rookwood development, leading to flooding “somewhere”. If the site goes forward, HDC will need to indemnify residents all along the waterway against flood risk or those residents will not be able to afford the home insurance premiums.

Undoubtedly, the proposed Rookwood development will stimulate further lengthy discussions, which will undoubtedly include the financial implications relating to the existing land covenants and the sight and circulation of financial and economic analysis. However, we must again emphasise the importance that these matters are seen as happening through public discussion in appropriate forums. To sum up – we reiterate that Rookwood should be withdrawn from the draft Local Plan process.

Thank you.

Forest Neighbourhood Councillors