HELLINGLY NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOPIC PAPER NO. 9

OUTDOOR PLAYING SPACE

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Planning should take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

Core Planning Principle
National Planning Policy Framework, para. 17

Existing Provision

1. There are 3 outdoor sports and recreation grounds in the Parish of Hellingly. The Lower Horsebridge Recreation Ground comprises a full-size rugby pitch, a smaller training rugby pitch, a cricket pitch, a bowling green and an equipped children’s playground. The Lower Dicker Recreation Ground comprises a cycle track for juniors and an equipped children’s playground. The newly established Hellingly Country Park includes a cricket pitch, a ball court and 2 equipped children’s play areas.

2. These grounds are all owned by the Parish Council but the sports facilities are leased to their users who are responsible for their maintenance and management. The Lower Horsebridge Recreation Ground is used by the Hellingly Cricket, Rugby and Bowls Clubs. The cricket pitch at Hellingly Country Park is used by Hailsham Cricket Club. The Lower Dicker cycle track is used by the Hellingly Lions Cycle Speedway Club. Both the Lower Horsebridge and Country Park grounds have equipped pavilions, the former opened in 1954 and the latter in 2016.

3. The Lower Horsebridge Recreation Ground, the main sports facility in Hellingly Parish, is located next to the boundary with Hailsham Town. Many of its users live in Hailsham, as is also the case with the Lower Dicker and Country Park facilities.

Space Deficiency

4. Wealden District Council has been preparing an Open Space Study and Playing Pitch Strategy for the Wealden Local Plan which will assess the existing provision of different types of open space, sports and recreation facilities and make recommendations for improving both the amount and type of facilities available and their accessibility and quality. At the time of writing this has yet to be published.

5. The most recent information available dates from 2003 when Wealden District Council issued Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Outdoor Playing Space “for use by developers and by Town and Parish Councils as the bodies who are generally responsible for the implementation and management of outdoor playing spaces” as defined by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA). This definition includes facilities such as pitches, greens, courts, athletic tracks, croquet lawns and training areas in the ownership of local government or otherwise available for public use, plus equipped playgrounds and casual or informal playing spaces for children within housing estates. The NPFA requirement is 2.4 hectares of outdoor playing space per 1,000 population, of which 1.6-1.8 hectares should be youth/adult play space and the balance equipped or casual/informal play space.

6. The SPG reported that:
The town of Hailsham is very poorly provided for in terms of youth and adult provision. The existing facilities cumulatively account for less than 40% of the NPFA requirement. There is also a considerable shortfall of children’s play space, both informal and equipped, with less than 45% of the NPFA requirement.

and that

Hellingly is well provided for in terms of youth and adult provision, with there being a sizeable recreation ground in Lower Horsebridge. There is significant shortfall of children’s play space, both informal and equipped. There is only one modern equipped play area, again at Lower Horsebridge.

7. To meet the requirements associated with the Roebuck Park development, 2 hectares of land were allocated for a full size playing pitch, a junior playing pitch and children’s play areas in the grounds of Hellingly Hospital. In the event, the junior playing pitch was not delivered. To meet the needs of the Woodholm and Welbury Farm developments in North Hailsham, some 3 hectares of playing pitches were to be provided on low-lying land to the south of the River Cuckmere. These have not materialised.

8. The present position is, therefore, that the shortfall of children’s play space in both Hailsham and Hellingly has been reduced somewhat since 2003 by the provision of new play areas within these residential developments. The shortfall of youth and adult provision has however worsened, the only new outdoor facility to serve North Hailsham and Hellingly Parish being the cricket pitch at Hellingly Country Park.

9. Looking ahead, the demand for outdoor playing space is about to increase substantially. The Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan adopted in February 2013 allocated land for 240 dwellings to the west of Park Road and 460 dwellings to the south of New Road within the Parish of Hellingly. The Strategic Sites Local Plan approved in March 2014 required that, 2.5 hectares of youth and adult leisure and recreation should be provided west of Park Road to meet the needs of this development. However, the District Council agreed in early 2016 to accept a financial contribution towards the provision of this outdoor play space elsewhere. The residential development to the west of Park Road is now under way and commencement of that to the south of New Road is anticipated shortly, but there will be no on-site provision except for children’s play areas and it is not known where or when the off-site playing fields provision will become available.

10. Hellingly Parish is not an island. As already noted, its recreation grounds and playing fields help to meet the needs of Hailsham which is severely deficient in outdoor playing space. Hailsham’s deficiency is also growing. The Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan allocated land for an additional 600 dwellings in North East Hailsham not far from the parish boundary. Planning permissions have been granted for some of the allocated sites but, again, with no provision for youth and adult leisure and recreation.

11. As a result of the way the Core Strategy Local Plan has been and is being implemented, the open playing space deficiency in North Hailsham and Hellingly has
increased since 2003 when the SPG was issued by the District Council. Local clubs report that demand has grown in recent years. It is therefore important that future housing developments make appropriate provision for such space and that efforts made to reduce the present level of under-provision.

**Wealden Local Plan**

12. The new draft Wealden Local Plan (March 2017) allocates land for yet further residential development in Hellingly Parish. In total, 993 new homes will be provided in this area over and above the 740 allocated in the Core Strategy Local Plan. Land to the north of New Road and to the west of Park Road, Hellingly, is allocated as part of a strategic urban extension to North Hailsham to accommodate dwellings. In addition, an area of land on the south side of New Road previously allocated for employment purposes in the Core Strategy Local Plan has been de-allocated and will now presumably be developed for housing instead taking the total to well over 1,000.

13. Policy HWB1 of the draft Wealden Local Plan (March 2017) states:

> New or improved facilities should be provided to the standard of 2.6 hectares per 1,000 population in accordance with the detailed standards set out within the Open Space Study as summarised in Table 13. New or improved facilities will be expected to be of good design, quality and value to its users, seek to contribute to the health and wellbeing of future occupants and must also seek to strengthen the existing green network.

Table 13 is derived from the as yet unpublished Open Space Study which provides quantitative and accessibility standards for new facilities as well as recommendations to ensure good quality provision. It states that parks and recreation grounds including sports pitches should comprise 1.4 of the 2.6 hectares of open space per 1,000 population and should be located within 600 metres or a 12-13 minute walk from their homes.

14. On this basis and assuming an overall average occupancy rate of 2 persons per dwelling, around 2.8 hectares of parks and recreation grounds including sports pitches should be provided to meet the needs of the new residential development north and south of New Road proposed in the draft Wealden Local Plan (March 2017).

15. New Road is 1,700 metres in length. To meet the accessibility standard in Table 13 this 2.8 hectares should be split into 2, 1 each side of the road leading up to Park Farm. This would however make their management and maintenance more complicated and less efficient. It is suggested therefore that the 2.8 hectares should form a single centrally-located site.

16. It would be advantageous if such a site were to be connected to and become part of the Hellingly Country Park. This would facilitate management and maintenance and allow for some sharing of facilities. For example, if the sports facilities provided primarily for winter sports (football, rugby, hockey) they could utilise the cricket pavilion which remains unused outside the summer season. It is suggested that this approach, which would strengthen the existing green network as recommended in the
17. The Wealden Local Plan Issues, Options and Recommendations (IOR) published in October 2015 stated in para. 9.15 that “the Council is exploring the provision of a sports park: the location of this facility has not been determined and an assessment of reasonable alternatives to sports park provision will be required if it is considered that it should be contained within the Local Plan”. Its location would be “where there is the greatest need in terms of under-provision for the local area together with the greatest need arising through additional residential development”. However, the draft Wealden Local Plan (March 2017) does not include such a park as a policy proposal, nor does it identify or allocate a site for one. Indeed, Policy HWB1 makes it clear that new provision for open space, sports and recreation must be provided on site subject to 2 provisos, neither of which would apply in this case.

Lower Horsebridge Recreation Ground

18. The above facility would help to meet the needs of the new population in this strategic growth area but would do little to address the existing level of under-provision. It is important, therefore, that every effort be made to increase the capacity of existing facilities. There is now an opportunity for achieving this at the Lower Horsebridge Recreation Ground.

19. Towards the end of 2016 a planning application (WD/2016/2813/MAJ) was submitted to develop land to the south of Kings Head Public House and east of the Recreation Ground for 10 dwellings and associated works. The proposed residential site fronted on to the A271 and formed part of a field known, because of its previous use, as the ‘fairground field’. The application was accompanied by an Unilateral Undertaking under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to transfer the remainder of the site to the Parish Council, prior to the occupation of any of the dwellings, provided that it is not used “for any purpose whatsoever other than for recreational purposes for the benefit of the public as an extension to the existing Lower Horsebridge Recreation Ground”. A copy of this undertaking is attached as Appendix A.

20. The application, which was supported by the Parish Council, was withdrawn for technical reasons on 6 February 2017. Nevertheless, there is no reason to believe that the Undertaking will be rescinded if and when the application is re-submitted and approved.

21. The Recreation Ground is liable to flooding due to the high water table. This is about to be addressed by the installation of an underground drainage system. The extension of the Recreation Ground would make possible further improvements including the re-arrangement of existing facilities and the introduction of new ones.

22. At a Discussion Group meeting on 9 April 2016 the Rugby Club reported that the shortage of car parking space was a major impediment to any increased use of the Recreation Ground (HNDP/S2). This was reiterated at a meeting with users of the Ground on 17 August 2016 (Appendix B). After the application for 10 houses on part if the former fairground site was submitted together with its related Section 106
Unilateral Undertaking, a further meeting with the users was held on 4 April 2017 to discuss how they would wish the proposed extension to the Ground to be utilised (Appendix C). There was a unanimous view that it should accommodate a car park (preferably 120 spaces) and an indoor facility (40m x 15m plus changing facilities, toilets and storage) which could be used for training and indoor games during the winter months.

23. The sketch drawing (Appendix D) indicates how this might be achieved. It would necessitate a new 2-way access to the Bowls Club, which in turn would require the relocation of the children’s playground on to the site of the existing car park. The scheme would of course be subject to detailed land survey, costing and further public consultation.

Conclusion

24. There is now an undoubted shortage of outdoor playing space in the North Hailsham and Hellingly area. This will increase with the extensive amount of new residential development which is already planned or is proposed in the draft Wealden Local Plan. To prevent this shortage worsening, new facilities will have to be provided and existing facilities improved.

25. It is suggested that:

a) Wealden District Council be recommended to require the provision of an outdoor playing area for youth and adult recreation of approximately 2.8 hectares as an extension to the Hellingly Country Park to serve the new residential development north of New Road, Hellingly and nearby.

b) That part of the former fairground field which is to be transferred to the Parish Council if planning application WD/2016/2813/MAJ or its successor is approved be allocated in the Neighbourhood Development Plan as an extension to the Lower Horsebridge Recreation Ground.

26. As the District Council says in para. 3.9 of the draft Wealden Local Plan (March 2017):

*The provision of good quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation provide an important contribution to the health and wellbeing of the district’s communities. They can also provide cultural, ecological and landscape functions. On a more social level, sports and recreation facilities can also promote community cohesion and can encourage community development.*

The latter point is particularly relevant in the circumstances of the North Hailsham/Hellingly area where so much new development is scheduled to take place.
Appendix A

Unilateral Agreement
Hellingly Neighbourhood Development Plan

Notes of meeting about Lower Horsebridge Recreation Ground
17 August 2016

Present:
Parish Council: Councillors J Blake (JB), W Hesselgrave (WH) and D White (DW), David Phillips (DP) (Consultant) and Suzanne Collins (SC) (Clerk)
Bowls Club: Roy Stanley (RS), Kevin Hylands(KH) and Trevor Constable (TC)
Cricket Club: Steve Hook (SH)
Rugby Club: Stewart Brierley (SB)
Sports Club: Andy Rose (AR)
Hailsham Active
Sports Alliance: Steve Wennington (SW)

The Chairman of the Council explained that the meeting had been arranged in order that the Council could understand the aspirations of the Clubs for the Recreation Ground. He explained that the Council had ambitions of their own and would like to ensure future development of the Ground for the public.

He explained that the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) would be for a 15-year period and that Wealden District Council’s Local Plan would be for a period up to 2037. Both Plans could be reviewed at any time, but it is likely that this would be done only if there was some significant change. He explained that Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which would be received from new development could be used for improving services e.g. sports facilities.

SW explained that very often the ongoing maintenance costs of facilities are forgotten and it is often this that prevents new facilities being provided. It was noted that there is a need in the Hailsham/Hellingly area for probably 2 new sports/recreation grounds as there is a need for a football pitch.

It was clear from the meeting that car parking is a major issue and this is holding back development of the Clubs. DP asked those present to provide information re maximum number of cars which would give us some idea of the amount of land that would be needed.

It was noted that the Clubs would like to attract more members but they feel that the lack of parking would prevent new members joining.

It was suggested that there needs to be a distinction between recreational space and sports facilities.

JB explained that we can include this in our NDP but for the Inspector to agree we would need justification for the new facilities and will need numbers in respect of parking requirements. We would need to be specific in what we are proposing.
DP further explained that we need to be able to convince the Inspector that we are not just seeing the developers as a cash cow.

It was suggested that if car parking could be increased then so could participation, the Rugby Club have lots of ideas of what they would like to do but they cannot move forward if there is nowhere to park.

It was again reiterated to provide us with information on headed paper with cumulative figures.

SH suggested that the ideal for them would be to have 2 pitches on one site so that they could have all their games in one place. It was noted that against this is the fact that the recreation ground is also used for Rugby and is therefore in use all year round. Both Clubs are growing and this means a bigger compromise on the ground, it is costing more to maintain, the increased use means that the amount of time available to maintain the ground is reduced.

It was noted that a grant has been applied for to change the inside space of the sports pavilion.

JB asked whether we should be concentrating on the sports that aren’t already represented in Hellingly? In response it was suggested that the provision of an Astro pitch would be good for that but these are very expensive to put in and run.

SB asked what the situation is in respect of laybys and whether it would be possible to put one in on the grass verge by the car park. These are regulated by ESCC and their approval would be required to be able to put one in.

DP reminded those present that the NDP can only be for Hellingly and not the wider area and suggested that if we are saying that a particular sport is needed and should be included then we would need information to support this.

It was suggested that if the recreation ground was to be increased in size this would not impact many properties.

JB suggested that one of the problems is that we don’t have clubs coming forward saying that they don’t have a facility. SW was asked for evidence of this.

JB explained that the next step from our point of view is to put something down in a map form and then meet again so we can come up with some specific proposals.

Close 12.05.

Suzanne Collins  
Parish Clerk
Appendix C

Hellingly Neighbourhood Development Plan

Notes of meeting about Lower Horsebridge Recreation Ground
4 April 2017

Present:
Parish Council: Councillors J Blake (JB) and Suzanne Collins (SC) (Clerk)
Bowls Club: Roy Stanley (RS), Kevin Hylands (KH), Trevor Constable (TC), Brian Lumley (BL), Francis Doe (FD)
Cricket Club: Steve Hook (SH)
Rugby Club: Stewart Brierley (SB)
Sports Club: Andy Rose (AR)
Hailsham Active
Sports Alliance: Steve Wennington (SW)
American Football: Luke Boorer (LB)

JB explained that 3 months ago a planning application had been submitted for a development of housing on the former Fairground Field on Horsebridge Road. Part of the field would be transferred to the Parish Council under a planning obligation, this would be for specific use as an extension to the recreation ground and would be transferred at any time during the development. This would give us the opportunity to enlarge the recreation ground.

There would be 2 ways to approach this:

Option 1 – use part of the new field to create about 70 parking spaces.

Option 2 – a line of parking along access road which would enable about 40 spaces, but this would mean that cars would be parked nearer to the sports playing area.

SW suggested that there was a possibility that the car parking together with the Kings Head car park could be shared. The consensus was that this would not work as on occasions the Kings Head held big functions and would take over the car parking.

SW also proposed that the sports clubs and other sporting organisations in the area would welcome an indoor facility on the field as well as the car park.

There was a consensus amongst those present that an indoor facility be welcomed as it would enable training to take place regularly during the winter months. It was noted that Hailsham Table Tennis Club need a venue big enough for them to have 4 tables playing at any one time.

The Bowls Club mentioned that they would like to build a new Bowls Pavilion so that they could play short mat bowls.
JB explained that the planning application had been withdrawn due to a technicality. He also commented that although the Parish Council would be receiving the field at nil cost, there would of course be the cost of carrying out any works.

In terms of the inspection of the NDP, it would be necessary to demonstrate that there was general support of users as the preferred way forward.

It was agreed that car parking was the priority with 100 spaces needed as a minimum.

**Summary:**

- That the access road down to the Bowls Club should be 2 way.
- That car parking should be provided on the new field – 120 spaces and that additional linear parking on the recreation ground be provided too.
- Indoor facility – 40x15m indoor playing area, changing facilities, toilets and storage.
- Play area to be moved to the existing car park.
- Along-term aspiration would be to move the existing sports pavilion to the other side of the recreation ground, this new Pavilion to be a larger and shared facility by all the Clubs at the Recreation Ground.

Close 15.25.

Suzanne Collins
Parish Clerk 27 April 2017
Appendix D

Sketch of Lower Horsebridge Recreation Ground Proposals
Author

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Councillor – Hellingly Parish Council, 2015 –

Vice President, Town and Country Planning Association