



Cooksbridge Sustainable Extension

Representations on the Lewes District Local Plan - Issues and Options Consultation

Iceni Projects Limited on behalf of
Estates & Agency Strategic Land

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Iceni Projects, on behalf of Estates & Agency Strategic Land ('EASL'), welcomes the opportunity to submit representations to the Lewes District Council ('LDC') Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation 2021. EASL has an interest in agricultural land to the northeast of Cooksbridge ('the Site') which could deliver approximately 1,100 new houses, local services and associated infrastructure. The land is in single ownership and represents an excellent opportunity for a large-scale sustainable extension to Cooksbridge. EASL is working with stakeholders to promote this landholding through the local plan process as a deliverable option for sustainable growth.
- 1.2 EASL considers Cooksbridge to present a unique opportunity to deliver a valuable development for the District and that it should accordingly be allocated within the new Local Plan for residential-led development to contribute towards meeting Lewes District's housing needs over the Local Plan period. These representations should be read alongside the accompanying Vision Statement prepared by Scott Brownrigg which responds to the draft local plan and highlights an indicative masterplan to outline how the development could be brought forward.
- 1.3 A sustainable extension to the northeast of Cooksbridge provides an ambitious and strategic option for ensuring that the District's Objectively Assessed Housing Need is fully met. The site comprises predominantly agricultural land adjacent to the village boundary and provides an opportunity to deliver c. 1,100 new homes (including affordable and self-build provision), a new school, live/work units, public amenity space and flexible multi-function Use Class E floorspace.
- 1.4 Separate representations have been submitted for two fields on the east and west of the A275, immediately adjacent to the northern settlement boundary of Cooksbridge as a small scale proposal with a capacity for up to 200 homes. It is requested that these representations are considered independently of the proposed sustainable urban extension.

2. SITE CONTEXT

- 2.1 Cooksbridge lies 3.5km to the north of Lewes, on the A275 which runs between Lewes and East Grinstead. The early settlement grew at the junction of the A275 and Deadmantree Hill which leads to Barcombe, and this part of the settlement is a Conservation Area and includes a number of listed buildings including the Rainbow Pub and Carvery close to the junction.
- 2.2 The larger more recent settlement has developed around 0.5km to the south around the railway, and is now the largest residential area in the parish of Hamsey. The rail line runs from Eastbourne/Lewes north-west to Burgess Hill (the East Coastway line) where it joins the Brighton Mainline. There are hourly train services to London Victoria, Lewes and Eastbourne.
- 2.3 The village has a primary school (Hamsey Community Primary School), a village hall (Beechwood Hall)¹ with associated playground and park. There is associated greenspace around this, as identified in the Hamsey Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2.4 The Site comprises largely agricultural land adjacent to the northeast of Cooksbridge, as shown in the accompanying Vision Statement. It outlines why the northeast of Cooksbridge should be identified as a priority location for growth in the District, benefitting from a range of sustainable transport options including a train station and bus routes. The village has good road links via the A275, as well as sitting outside the South Downs National Park and the Ashdown Forest Zone of Influence. It is also relatively unconstrained by environmental and heritage designations such as sensitive ecological sites or flood zones.

¹ <https://www.beechwoodhall.org/>

3. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

3.1 It is acknowledged that, the plan will be prepared under the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') (Updated July 2021). When examining the soundness of a Local Plan the NPPF explains under paragraph 35 that plans must be:

- a) **Positively prepared** – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;
- b) **Justified** – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;
- c) **Effective** – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and
- d) **Consistent with national policy** – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this Framework and other statements of national planning policy, where relevant.

Plan-led approach

3.2 The NPPF states that the planning system should be genuinely plan-led. Succinct and up-to-date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area; a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings.

3.3 Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making this means that all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to:

- meet the development needs of their area;
- align growth and infrastructure;
- improve the environment;
- mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects.

3.4 Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for housing, infrastructure, community facilities and conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment. These policies should provide a clear strategy for bringing sufficient land forward, and at a sufficient rate, to address objectively assessed

needs over the plan period, in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This should include planning for and allocating sufficient sites to deliver the strategic priorities of the area.

Delivering sufficient homes

3.5 Paragraph 61 of the NPPF states that to determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance – unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals. In addition to the local housing need figure, any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for.

3.6 Iceni welcomes the Council's recognition that the standard methodology figure of 782 homes per year (or 15,640 new homes up to 2040), will be used as the starting point for future planning. We consider that where there are sustainable sites that can be allocated, they should be in order to meet the identified need.

Large Scale Growth

3.7 The most recent revisions to the NPPF include the requirement '*Where larger scale developments such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns form part of the strategy for the area, policies should be set within a vision that looks further ahead (at least 30 years), to take into account the likely timescale for delivery*'.

3.8 At paragraph 73 the NPPF considers that "*The supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities (including a genuine choice of transport modes). Working with the support of their communities, and with other authorities if appropriate, strategic policy-making authorities should identify suitable locations for such development where this can help to meet identified needs in a sustainable way.*"

3.9 The NPPF advocates that in identifying suitable locations for such development strategic policy-making authorities should consider a host of factors which are detailed in the table below, alongside a review of the relevant features of a larger scale development at Cooksbridge. The policy requirements set out in paragraph 73 of the Framework provide the basis for assessing the potential and suitability of growth at Cooksbridge.

Table 3.1 Assessment of proposed site against NPPF Paragraph 73

Paragraph 73 NPPF – Criteria for larger scale developments	Assessment of Growth Option – Northeast of Cooksbridge
<p><i>a) consider the opportunities presented by existing or planned investment in infrastructure, the area's economic potential and the scope for net environmental gains</i></p>	<p>The Site is located adjacent to Cooksbridge, which has recently benefited from improved railway infrastructure completed in Summer 2020. The station is located approximately 140m to the southwest and is now served by full-length trains every hour to destinations such as Lewes, Ore, Eastbourne, Hastings, and London Victoria. The platform was extended and the level crossing was resurfaced and re-railed so that the A275 is no longer closed whilst trains stop at the station. Cooksbridge's proximity to Brighton and Gatwick Airport makes this an ideal location for investment and offers potential to increase the economic potential of the area. Given the extent of land under the control of EASL it is considered at this early stage that environmental enhancements can be achieved.</p>
<p><i>b) ensure that their size and location will support a sustainable community, with sufficient access to services and employment opportunities within the development itself (without expecting an unrealistic level of self-containment), or in larger towns to which there is good access;</i></p>	<p>The development would provide the critical mass and population to support a wider range of community facilities and services, potentially providing a new local centre, education facilities, parkland and transport options to serve the new and existing community. The proposals will be masterplanned as a walkable 20-minute neighbourhood. Further details are provided within the Vision Document submitted with these representations.</p>
<p><i>c) set clear expectations for the quality of the places to be created and how this can be maintained (such as by following Garden City principles); and ensure that appropriate tools such as masterplans and design guides or codes are used to secure a variety of well-designed and beautiful homes to meet the needs of different groups in the community;</i></p>	<p>The scheme can be designed to provide a range of housing to meet all demographics and local needs, providing a mix of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing tenures and sizes including 40% affordable; • Specialised housing types such as self/custom-build and live/work units; • Land uses such as employment, education, community and retail uses.
<p><i>d) make a realistic assessment of likely rates of delivery, given the lead-in times for large scale sites, and identify opportunities for supporting rapid implementation (such as through joint ventures or locally-led development corporations)</i></p>	<p>The residential-led mixed-use scheme of approximately 1,100 dwellings will be phased with initial phases of the development immediately adjacent to the existing village, contributing towards the district's housing supply within 5 years. This would be particularly important given the current lack of deliverable sites to meet housing supply over the next 5 years. It is anticipated that the wider scheme could be completed in the early part of the new plan period subject to infrastructure delivery. Initial transport studies indicate the local highway network and level crossings could accommodate the new dwellings without requiring upgrades. EASL are experienced with larger scale developments such as this and have the financial resources to deliver this development. EASL would also welcome</p>

	discussions with LDC about this, particularly in relation to the delivery of affordable housing.
e) consider whether it is appropriate to establish Green Belt around or adjoining new developments of significant size.	The development will be designed with defensible boundaries, logically defined by the landscape framework. The district does not have Green Belt land, but the land to the southwest of the Site would be protected by the South Downs National Park.

Vitality of Rural Communities

3.22 Paragraph 79 of the NPPF now states that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby.

3.23 There are a range of existing rural communities in the vicinity of the proposed growth option. The emerging Masterplan and all future proposals will ensure that the character and identity of these existing settlements is retained, while also delivering new infrastructure and services which will be of benefit to the established rural communities. Opportunities will be sought to extend the public footpath and bridleway network to connect Cooksbridge with outlying communities.

Duty to Cooperate

3.24 The NPPF restates that planning authorities are under a duty to cooperate with each other, and with other prescribed bodies, on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries. Strategic policy-making authorities should collaborate to identify the relevant strategic matters which they need to address in their plans. Effective and on-going joint working between strategic policy-making authorities and relevant bodies is integral to the production of a positively prepared and justified strategy. In particular, joint working should help to determine where additional infrastructure is necessary, and whether development needs that cannot be met wholly within a particular plan area could be met elsewhere. In order to demonstrate effective and on-going joint working, strategic policymaking authorities should prepare and maintain one or more statements of common ground, documenting the cross-boundary matters being addressed and progress in cooperating to address these.

High Quality & Beautiful Design

3.25 At paragraph 128, the NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, and which reflect local character and design preferences. Design guides and codes provide a local framework for creating beautiful and distinctive places with a consistent and high-quality standard of design.

3.26 National policy in respect of design has been detailed further at paragraph 129 which states that “*Design guides and codes can be prepared at an area-wide, neighbourhood or site specific scale, and to carry weight in decision-making should be produced either as part of a plan or as supplementary planning documents. Landowners and developers may contribute to these exercises, but may also choose to prepare design codes in support of a planning application for sites they wish to develop*”.

4. ACCOMMODATING AND DELIVERING GROWTH

4.1 The coastal towns of Peacehaven, Newhaven and Seaford have accommodated the majority of growth in the currently adopted local plan. Further large-scale growth along the coast is constrained by congestion on the A259, flood risk, air quality issues and the surrounding South Downs National Park. Housing need has now substantially increased to 782 dwellings per annum under the standardised methodology. Whilst the continued intensification of existing urban areas is supported, we would encourage LDC to take a more ambitious and strategic approach to ensure that the Objectively Assessed Housing Need is fully met. A sustainable extension to Cooksbridge could help meet these targets and also provide employment, education, community and leisure uses.

Housing Need

4.2 As set out in the Council's Topic Paper 3 Accommodating and Delivering Growth, in order to adhere to the NPPF the Local Plan must provide a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed housing need using the Government's standard method.

4.3 The table below sets out the current housing requirement along with the minimum housing number as set out in the Government's Standard Method. For the purposes of the Five Year Housing Land Supply the Council have calculated the housing requirement for the district excluding the National Park. It is acknowledged that further work will need to be undertaken to determine whether or not this figure is appropriate for the purposes of plan making.

4.4 Nonetheless the Council's minimum housing need requirement on the emerging Local Plan will be more than double the housing requirement in the LPP1. The scale of this increase is very significant within Lewes and requires an ambitious strategy in order to meet the challenge and deliver new sustainable communities within the authority.

Table 4.1 The Housing Requirement for Lewes

	Per Annum	20 Year Plan Period	Outside of the South Downs National Park Per annum ²	Outside of the South Downs National Park Plan Period
Current Housing Requirement LPP1	345	6,900 (2010 – 2030)	275	5494 (2010 – 2030)
Government's standard method	782	15,640 (2020 – 2040)	602	12,040 (2020 – 2040)

² The Council has published its Approach to Local Housing Need for Lewes district outside the South Downs National Park for the purposes of the Five Year Housing Land Supply (May 2021).

Distribution of Growth - Q 3.2 What is your preferred option, or combination of options?

4.5 The Issues and options Local Plan identifies several broad options for accommodating development growth within the plan area. Whilst acknowledging these options are not necessarily mutually exclusive, EASL's preferred option would be to focus growth on the most sustainable villages in the Low Weald. The Council's Consultation considers the potential for a new settlement with a scale of a minimum of 2,00 homes, thus given the anticipated scale of growth at Cooksbridge this scheme would not constitute a new settlement.

4.6 The Low Weald provides the greatest opportunity for accommodating the required growth in the future. However, large areas of the Low Weald are constrained by proximity to Ashdown Forest and lack public transport options. The accompanying Vision Statement compares the credentials of expanding the existing settlements in the District which illustrates the limited opportunities for strategic growth in the District.

4.7 EASL therefore believe growth needs to be focussed on the most sustainable locations (i.e. Cooksbridge) in order to achieve the local plan goals such as net zero carbon by 2030 and cleaner air across the district. Advantages of this growth option are identified in the consultation document as being:

- Opportunity to create an innovative, resilient and well-designed settlement;
- Would be developed through a masterplan that could include jobs, community facilities and local services alongside homes;
- Opportunities to maximise sustainability gains through the use of local energy generation and supply systems, sustainable urban drainage systems, a comprehensive green infrastructure network, the creation of 'walkable' neighbourhoods, etc;
- Greenfield development may enable the provision of a higher level of affordable housing; and
- Potential to relieve development pressures on the Low Weald villages, thereby retaining their character.

4.8 The following section of these representations provides detail on the initial vision for a new sustainable extension at Cooksbridge. Our client welcomes the opportunity to work with the Council in order to test this growth proposal through the evidence base.

5. COOKSBRIDGE SUSTAINABLE EXTENSION

5.1 Cooksbridge should be considered as a priority location for growth in the district as it is relatively unconstrained in environmental terms, has the capacity to accommodate large-scale growth, is located in close proximity to the strategic road network and is well-served by public transport.

5.2 It is noted that LDC previously investigated scope for a new settlement of at least 5,000 homes in the district³. The report works through a sieve exercise of land in the district based on population, environmental constraints and transport considerations. Cooksbridge was identified as one of the few locations in the District that were not screened out due to environmental constraints. Indeed, the key issue in respect of Cooksbridge was the absence of available land. These current representations resolve this issue.

5.3 These representations and the accompanying Vision Statement outline why we consider there to be suitable, available and deliverable land at Cooksbridge for a new large-scale sustainable extension to the existing village. The Hamsey Neighbourhood Plan (2016) sets out that Cooksbridge should be developed as an effective centre for the Parish providing improved facilities for travel, community facilities (particularly a shop) and enhanced opportunities for active leisure and social activities. An increased local population and growth would be required to support this.

5.4 The consultation document goes on to outline some potential disadvantages with this growth option. However, some of the identified issues would not fully apply to Cooksbridge.

Table 5.1 Commentary of proposed site against the disadvantages of focussing growth on sustainable villages as stated in the local plan

Disadvantage identified in consultation document	Commentary in relation to Cooksbridge
Difficult to facilitate walking, cycling and the use of public transport as real travel choices	The Site is located in close proximity to bus routes and Cooksbridge Railway Station. The development scheme can also be designed to maximise active travel options. As a result the development of the subject lands will ensure that future residents have a genuine choice of transport.
More reliance on car use	Sustainable travel options are a real potential for the Site as there is already existing public transport infrastructure. The scheme can be designed to encourage walking and cycling by residents. As outlined in the Vision Statement, a 20-minute walkable neighbourhood can be masterplanned.
Very limited potential for brownfield development	This is acknowledged as all brownfield sites in the village have been developed. The majority of sites on the Council's Brownfield Land

³ [Assessing the potential for accommodating a new settlement within the Lewes District: Scoping Report \(April 2012\)](#)

	Register already have planning permission or are pending determination.
Requires greenfield sites and the loss of open countryside	Cooksbridge is constrained by the adjacent South Downs National Park and therefore any growth would need to be towards the northeast. The design of a large-scale extension would need to be landscape-led and potential development zones have initially been identified with regard to landscape impact and viewpoints from the National Park. The masterplan can be developed with respect to existing blue and green infrastructure.
Risk of harm to the distinctive rural character and setting of villages	High-quality design of the new buildings and landscaping has the potential to enhance the character of Cooksbridge. As outlined in the Vision Statement, a new tree-lined entrance to the village can be created through an improved and landscaped A275.
Potential impact on community identity and coherence	Lewes District has an ageing population and the provision of new housing can help to rebalance the vitality of the community. A range of housing types can be delivered to enable local people to continue living within the community once their housing needs change.
Risk of harm to the Low Weald landscape	Historic and existing field boundaries and hedgerows have been used to define the Site and to provide a defensible physical or historic boundary. The new development will be arranged to limit the visual impact by ensuring buildings respond to the site contours and surrounding built form and landscape.
Would not allow the smaller villages to grow and thrive	The priority for the new Local Plan should be sustainable growth as outlined in the NPPF. The increased population at the Site could help to support existing services in Cooksbridge and provide new facilities. As such, residents of nearby smaller villages can also benefit as they may not need to travel as far to access services, and it would help to sustain infrastructure such as bus routes and schools.

Proposed Illustrative Masterplan

5.5 An Emerging Vision for the Site has been prepared by Scott Brownrigg and is submitted with these representations. To demonstrate how the site could achieve the Council's aims for sustainable housing growth with c. 1,100 homes, as well as deliver social, environmental and economic benefits. The proposed development opportunity would create:

- A highly sustainable and well-connected neighbourhood with public transport options;
- Make a significant contribution towards the District's housing needs and improve the delivery of homes in the short and medium term;
- An opportunity to provide affordable housing and a range of housing types within the existing community;

- Respect the setting of Cooksbridge;
- Consider the existing landscape structure and the South Downs National Park;
- Provide new community and amenity space;
- Habitat & ecology enhancements;
- Potential for live / work units and sustainable design;
- Contribution to off-site footpath network.

Land uses

5.6 Hamsey Community Primary School is located close to the Site and has been rated as 'Good' by Ofsted. This educational establishment means residents of Cooksbridge do not need to travel long distances to take children to school. An increase in the local population will help to ensure the school remains operational and operates efficiently. Other social infrastructure available in Cooksbridge includes public amenity space and playground, allotments and Beechwood Hall, hosting community events and private functions.

5.7 The Council's current 2016 Core Strategy outlines that the social mix and vitality of villages is being undermined by a shortage of affordable housing, out-commuting, a decline in the number/range of services and limited public transport. In terms of public transport, Cooksbridge is one of the best-served villages in the District with a railway station and bus connections. The potential development will provide the critical mass to deliver improvements to the village and desired community facilities. Development of c. 1,100 units on the Site with spatial provision for flexible multi-purpose Use Class E floorspace could secure additional social infrastructure currently lacking in the village, such as a convenience shop, post office or medical centre. Provision of such a facility is currently being explored by EASL with stakeholders. It would benefit existing and future residents by enabling them to access everyday services and amenities without the need to travel long distances by car or public transport, helping to ensure Cooksbridge is a destination in its own right.

5.8 Moreover, there is potential for a new two-form entry primary school with nursery spaces, allotments and public amenity space. An increase in population within the Cooksbridge settlement through further development will be needed to secure new facilities and services.

5.9 ONS Business Register and Employment Survey⁴ data currently indicates total employment in the immediate area, encompassing Cooksbridge and surrounding settlements such as Offham, Hamsey and Barcombe at 900 persons. This is based on the location of people's work. Of these 900 people, 110 workers are currently employed in Business and Professional Services. We would envisage

⁴ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/select/getdatasetbytheme.asp?theme=27>

many to be small businesses and working at home. As such, there is potential to provide workspace for SMEs and live/work units as part of the sustainable extension to Cooksbridge.

5.10 There is also potential for the scheme to provide serviced plots for self-build and custom housebuilding. There is a pressing need for the Council to identify suitable, serviced plots of land which directly meet the need for self-build development. The Right to Build enshrined within the Housing and Planning Act 2016 sets a legal duty for LDC to maintain the Self-Build Register and grant the relevant number of consents within 3 years. Over the period to October 2020, the Council should therefore have granted consent for 120 self-build plots according the LDC Annual Monitoring Report⁵. Moreover, evidence from Buildstore⁶ indicates the LDC register may significantly undercount need with 984 people interested on the Buildstore Custom Build Register for Lewes (albeit there is no specific requirement for a local connection). Delivery of self-build plots in the District have fallen significantly below the stated need. As such the potential for plots at Cooksbridge should be welcomed in assisting to meet LDC's legal duty.

Transport and Access

5.11 The village has recently benefitted from improvements in public transport services. Cooksbridge Railway Station is located at the heart of the settlement located around 140m to the south of the site and underwent improvements in May 2020. Moreover, the level crossing was resurfaced and re-railed and will no longer be blocked by trains at the station. The station provides hourly services towards Lewes, Ore, Eastbourne, Hastings, and London Victoria. The station platform is a short walking distance of the entirety of the subject site. Cooksbridge is also served by bus routes 121, 122 and 167 towards Lewes, Burgess Hill and Newick. Future residents will be provided with the opportunity to travel to work or education by sustainable transport methods, and will help to ensure the services are well-used and maintained.

5.12 The main constraint to the local highway network is the Cooksbridge railway level crossing on the A275 as trains arrive and depart the adjacent station. As such, initial Level Crossing Impact Analysis has been undertaken to understand the indicative number of additional dwellings that could be delivered at Cooksbridge without having an adverse impact on the existing level crossing. The calculations conclude that a development of c. 1,100 dwellings could be accommodated on the basis of the existing level crossing.

5.13 Safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle access can also be designed as part of any future development to complement the public transport options and create a walkable neighbourhood. The proposal will deliver high quality placemaking to Cooksbridge in accordance with national and local planning policy which will include improving the entrance to the village from the north along the A275

⁵ Authority Monitoring Report 2018-2019 and 2019-20

⁶ <https://www.buildstore.co.uk/>

through retained planting and tree-lined streets. There is an opportunity to provide an improved drop-off point for Hamsey Community Primary School. Currently the school has very limited parking provision with a number of parents and guardians having to park their cars along the busy A275 or Hamsey Lane. The current situation is dangerous given the need for children to cross a busy road at peak times, Moreover, it is also intended to realign Hamsey Lane to remove the tight junction and provide a set back from the school and residential property during drop-off and pick-up times. A proposed new drop-off facility would help to ease congestion and provide a suitable and safe area for cars to stop and children to wait before crossing the busy road. A new crossing will be established linking the drop-off facility to the school.

Supporting Growth

- 5.14 As shown in Figure 2 of the local plan consultation document, Lewes town is highly constrained by the South Downs National Park. House prices in the town are very high with housing affordability and access to affordable housing for younger households being a potential barrier for some. The socio-economic consequences of this can act as a restraint to future growth of the town.
- 5.15 Cooksbridge is located approximately 3km northwest of Lewes with good road and public transport connections. It could be considered an outlying satellite village to Lewes town, and as outlined in these representations, could support its continued growth in a sustainable manner.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 This document sets out our representations on the LDC Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation 2021 on behalf of our client, EASL.

6.2 In order to meet the housing requirement, we would encourage LDC to accommodate growth within sustainable towns and villages in Low Weald such as Cooksbridge. A sustainable extension to the northeast of Cooksbridge provides an ambitious and strategic option for ensuring that the District's Objectively Assessed Housing Need is fully met. The site comprises predominantly agricultural land adjacent to the village boundary and could deliver c. 1,100 new homes (including affordable and self-build provision), a new school, live/work units, public amenity space and flexible multi-function Use Class E floorspace.

6.3 Cooksbridge provides an ideal opportunity to meet the objectives of the new Local Plan, providing a logical and sustainable extension to the existing village. The land is in single ownership and considered to be available, suitable and achievable for residential-led development. It should be identified as an allocation within the emerging Local Plan, in order to assist the Council in delivering a sound development strategy for Cooksbridge and the district more widely. We will be pleased to provide further details and discuss these matters in further detail with officers as the preparation of the Local Plan progresses.

6.4 As outlined in the accompanying Emerging Vision document, the growth option could deliver the following benefits:

- A sensitively designed extension to existing settlement with consideration to the currently landscape and viewpoints;
- Close to Cooksbridge Railway Station and bus services with potential to improve existing provision;
- Well-served by the A275 and ability to improve the design of the road;
- Located outside the South Downs National Park, Old Cooksbridge Conservation Area and far less constrained than other settlements in the District;
- Promote active and sustainable travel options, and designed as a walkable neighbourhood;
- Potential for a new school, commercial and community floorspace, allotments and orchards;

- Contribute towards meeting a range of affordable, live/work and self-build needs in the District through c. 1,100 new homes, helping to avoid the socio-economic consequences of insufficient housing delivery;
- Provide public amenity space, green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancements.

6.5 We trust the Council will take these comments into account in the production of the next draft of the plan, and we welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively and constructively with the Council as matters progress. Please do not hesitate to contact Iceni Projects should you wish to discuss matters further.