



DON'T URBANISE HAMSEY

**Please act now! Engage with the Consultation
and help save our precious countryside**

As you are aware, Lewes District Council has launched its **Towards a Lewes Local Plan: Spatial Strategy and Policy Directions** consultation. The consultation runs **until 8 February** and this is your chance to keep this devastating development in Hamsey Parish out of the Local Plan.

EVERY member of your household can respond to the consultation separately and you DO NOT need to live in the Parish to take part. Please also ask your friends and family to respond. We are a small community, but this development would affect a far wider area of Lewes District – and we need strength in numbers to have the maximum impact.

Having reviewed the consultation documents and obtained planning advice based on concerns that we know many of you share, we have included some guidance below. We hope this is helpful – but please be sure that your responses represent your own views and words.

STEP ONE – You will need to register for the Consultation

You can REGISTER for the Consultation via the link below:

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Enter all the details required.

You will then be sent an email to ACTIVATE your account. Do check your SPAM.

Then just login and you should be ready to go.

STEP TWO – Please comment on the Cooksbridge/Hamsey Site

Click on the link below to **comment specifically on the Cooksbridge/Hamsey site (referred to as site 19HY).**

[COMMENT ON SITES](#)

You will now see a heading: **“Comment on an Evidence Document (including a Land Availability Assessment Site)”**

Under **“1. Evidence Document Name”**, enter:

LAA site 19HY – Land North of Cooksbridge

Under “**2. Comments**”, please include anything you feel strongly about. Below is a **very brief summary paragraph**, then beneath that **some bullet points**, explaining why we think the Cooksbridge / Hamsey site 19HY is unsuitable for development:

The Cooksbridge / Hamsey site (19HY) should not be included in Lewes District Council’s Local Plan, It is so sensitive, the location so inappropriate and its development would conflict with so many national and local planning guidelines (including tests defined by Lewes District Council’s own “Interim Policy Statement on Housing Delivery” which it has said are ‘indicative of what will be used for site allocations in the new Local Plan’), that if Lewes District Council included site 19HY in the Local Plan they would be opening the floodgates for unsuitable and unsustainable greenfield development all over the district.

- **Development would Join five established settlements and small local villages** (Cooksbridge, Hamsey, North End, Old Cooksbridge and Offham). Old Cooksbridge and Offham are Conservation Areas and would be negatively impacted.
- **Development would NOT be appropriate to the size, character or role of the local village of Cooksbridge**
 - It would result in an enormous circa six-fold increase in the combined size (by number of households) of Cooksbridge and Hamsey
 - Cooksbridge is rightly defined as a ‘Local Village’ and is one of the least sustainable settlements in the district with almost no employment, and few services
 - Good quality greenfield land in productive agricultural use would be lost
 - Cooksbridge is a gateway to the National Park and a valued recreational area, due to its views, tranquillity, footpaths, quiet country lanes and feeling of remoteness
- **Cooksbridge and Hamsey are car dependent locations. The rail service does NOT increase Cooksbridge’s sustainability. The service is infrequent** (one train every hour in each direction) and there is no direct service to Brighton, the nearest City. Any increase in stopping trains would create gridlock on the A275 at the Cooksbridge level-crossing as the barrier is down for longer periods.
- **Higher carbon emissions from increase car use** is contrary to the Council’s aim of becoming a net zero district by 2030.
- **Severe impacts on the road network**, including level crossing safety issues, and breaching of capacity limits on the road network (particularly at Cooksbridge level crossing and Lewes Prison) in the immediate and surrounding area, most of which is within the SDNP. Increased traffic would overwhelm and destroy the character of the narrow rural lanes of Hamsey Lane, North End Lane and The Drove.
- **Development would not be contiguous (next to) Cooksbridge** given that the majority of the site is in remote open countryside, far away from the existing settlement.
- **Negative and severe impacts on the setting of the South Downs National Park (SDNP)**, including views into and out of the Park.
- **The ‘valued landscape’ character of the Western Low Weald would be destroyed**, which also serves as ‘greenbelt’ land next to Lewes, providing essential recreational space.
- **Direct threats to the SDNP**, particularly nearby Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) caused by increased air and light pollution, traffic and noise.
- **Negative impacts on heritage assets**, in particular the settings of Scheduled Monuments, Grade I and II Listed buildings and two Conservation Areas.
- **A loss of biodiversity, wildlife habitats, ancient hedgerows, ancient and veteran trees, threatening hundreds of protected and designated species**
- **Increased risk of flooding**, both within the site (part of which is a level 3 flood zone) and the surrounding area, even before the potential impact of climate change is factored in.
- **Threats to the River Ouse**, contrary to LDC’s Rights of Rivers Motion. The Ouse is already under considerable strain, failing to reach "good" ecological standards as defined by the EU Water Framework Directive.
- **A decade or more of disruption and polluting construction works** on the edge of five tranquil villages and hamlets, on the edge of the SDNP, causing significant harm to the community and environment.

If you have time please supplement your comments with some more detail using your local knowledge, experience and any expertise. Do add any further points you may have. The following more detailed thoughts have also been put together with the help of our planning consultants:

The land between Cooksbridge and Hamsey is a completely unsustainable location: The proposed site allocation would be akin to a new settlement in the middle of the countryside. The location is barely connected to Cooksbridge – and what is more, Cooksbridge is specifically identified in the Council’s ‘Settlement Hierarchy’ as being one of the least sustainable villages for housing growth in the district. The site is entirely remote from essential services and amenities, with a lack of critical infrastructure to support the scale of housing proposed. Any substantial development, let alone 1,100 new homes would not be proportionate to the population, services or amenities within Cooksbridge (population c.160 homes) or Hamsey (population c.24 homes) and would represent a six-fold increase in households in the area.

The District Council should focus on the good opportunities for growth in the most sustainable towns in the District, through redevelopment and intensification of ‘brownfield’ land (Spatial Option 1). Beyond that, development in more rural villages on greenfield land should focus only on local need and be proportionate to existing settlements, so **Spatial Option 5 (including 1,100 houses near Cooksbridge, being a village of just 160 existing homes) is the wrong approach entirely**, especially in light of the National Planning Policy Framework ‘brownfield-first’ approach.

Negative impact on rural villages and their heritage assets: The proposed site allocation would merge and coalesce the distinct historic settlements of Cooksbridge, Hamsey, North End, Old Cooksbridge and Offham (the latter two being Conservation Areas). The site would result in the loss of nearly 200 acres of productive and good quality farmland that contributes positively to the rural setting of the villages; and would have a negative impact on the setting of a number of heritage assets including Old Hamsey Church as well as views to and from the Scheduled Monuments on the Offham Escarpment and Lewes Castle, and their historic identity.

Negative impact on the landscape and South Downs National Park (SDNP): This development would have a significant and negative impact on the immediate, highly valued rural landscape, the setting of the adjacent SDNP - land with the highest protection in UK planning law. Treasured views from key vantage points within and around the site would be harmed, as well as important views of the surrounding Low Weald landscape from the South Downs Way National Trail (including from the Offham Escarpment and Blackcap) and the local network of footpaths and bridleways. Direct impacts (including on the SSSIs and dark skies) would be severe.

Insufficient infrastructure: any substantial development would have an overwhelming impact on local critical infrastructure capacity, with no realistic prospect of sufficient improvements. Significant highway safety harm would result from so many new homes using a likely single access point onto the A275, causing severe congestion at the Cooksbridge level-crossing, outside local schools, at the Lewes prison junction, the Ashcombe roundabout on the A27 (both currently at capacity during peak periods with no solution) and through Ditchling. This would increase dangerous ‘rat-running’, driving traffic into, overwhelming and destroying the character of the narrow lanes of Hamsey Lane, North End Lane and the Drove. These ancient rural lanes are frequently accessed for leisure by runners, cyclists and walkers due to their quiet nature – those uses would be inhibited by the increase in traffic and the change in character. The rural level crossing on the Drove, and the steep, narrow access from the Drove onto the A275 at Offham (adjacent to the Offham Marshes SSSI) would not cope with the increased traffic.

The developer’s reliance on Cooksbridge’s rural train station to provide sustainable transport modes to new residents is misleading as this train station provides only one train per hour in each direction, and no direct service to/from Brighton – this is far too infrequent to reliably incentivise use by the new population. Lewes District Council uses ONS data which shows that just over 2% of the population of the District travel to work by train. Future residents would therefore undoubtedly use private cars as their primary method of transport. Given that there are very few employers in Cooksbridge, this would create a new dormitory town isolated from services and amenities. More stopping trains could never realistically be introduced at Cooksbridge due to the severe impact of the level crossing barrier being down for even longer periods. Costly and lengthy upgrades to the level crossing infrastructure would be required for safety reasons.

Impact on wildlife & biodiversity: the proposed site allocation would also destroy an area rich with irreplaceable trees including ancient and veteran oaks and ancient hedgerows, along with other natural

habitats for wildlife. No less than 313 internationally and nationally protected and designated species have been recorded in the area, according to the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre. These include rare birds including skylarks and raptors, rare and protected mammals including two thirds of UK bat species, protected reptiles, amphibians and a wide range of invertebrates. The UK is in the bottom 10% internationally in terms of our biodiversity, so the threat to and destruction of rich habitats such as this is indefensible.

Here are a couple of other important points that we will be making, that you may also wish to raise:

- **The majority of comments made in the previous 'Issues and Options' consultation relating to a new largescale settlement in the Low Weald (including the then proposed Eton New Town) were objections to ALL large greenfield development**, and not just to a specific site. Therefore, these strong objections in the previous consultation also represent a strong objection to Cooksbridge / Hamsey site 19HY. We have not had a chance to comment on site 19HY before, as the land was submitted by the developers only AFTER the previous consultation had closed.
- **The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment carried out by AECOM is flawed and the scores in many areas unjustifiably low, including when compared with the assessment of the North Barnes ('Eton') Site (which is no longer being considered by the Council)**. For example, the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment does not take into account the proximity of the Cooksbridge / Hamsey site 19HY to the Offham to Clayton Escarpment, the site's unspoilt skylines or the history, heritage and local importance of the land.

Whilst our priority is to keep site 19HY out of the Local Plan, please do comment on any other sites you feel strongly about.

If you have time and wish to do so, please also respond to the Vision and Aims and Spatial Strategy sections in the questionnaire

You can click on the following link which will take you to the full questionnaire, which asks questions that are largely focused on policy.

[FULL QUESTIONNAIRE](#)

You do not need to respond to every question but the first two sections (*Vision and Aims*, *Spatial Strategy*) are the most important ones for the purposes of opposing the Cooksbridge / Hamsey site (19HY). Don't forget to click on **FINISH** when you are done.

Our summary comments on these key questions are below:

VISION AND AIMS

What are your views on the proposed Vision and Aims?

LDC should ensure that policies robustly protect the rural landscape character and rural nature of much of Lewes District. Development in and around local villages should be limited to small areas that are proportionate to the size and the existing services of the location; and encroachment into greenfield rural land should be avoided.

LDC's vision and aims should align with parish neighbourhood plans for realistic housing delivery and priorities in each parish.

The District Council should focus on the good opportunities for growth in the most sustainable towns in the District, through redevelopment and intensification of 'brownfield' land (Spatial Option 1).

The allocation of site 19HY Land North of Cooksbridge would be contrary to LDCs Vision and Aims. The development of large-scale housing in a remote location would contradict the Council's aim of delivering new housing in the right places (i.e. in sustainable locations) and the impact on the adjoining National Park, heritage assets and biodiversity would be severe. Future residents would be reliant on the private car for day to day transport and no employment opportunities would be provided on site, meaning that all future residents would be entirely dependent on

employment opportunities outside of the immediate area and likely outside of the Lewes District boundary. This would fail to achieve sustainable place-making goals as residents would not be rooted in their local area, nor would they contribute to the local economy. The use of private cars would increase carbon emissions that would have a detrimental impact on local biodiversity and air quality. The rail service does NOT increase Cooksbridge's sustainability. The service is infrequent (one train every hour in each direction) and there is no direct service to Brighton, the nearest City. Any increase in stopping trains would create gridlock on the A275 at the Cooksbridge level-crossing as the barrier is down for longer periods.

It is therefore considered that the vision and aims are acceptable and supported, albeit these naturally exclude site 19HY as being appropriate for development.

SPATIAL STRATEGY

Do you agree that the proposed range identified to determine the housing requirement is the correct approach? If not, please explain why.

Lewes District Council relies on using the standard methodology for assessing its local housing need which focuses on projected household growth, historic undersupply of housing, relative housing affordability, the size and location of existing urban settlements and presence of designated rural areas. The standard method remains a crude and blunt instrument to deliver housing targets, prioritising housing numbers above all other considerations including housing diversity, placemaking and design quality, access to job and services, and measures of environmental sustainability.

The Regulation 18 Consultation Spatial Strategy outlines that Lewes District Council considers the range for its housing requirement will fall between approximately 5,412 (271dpa) and approximately 9,365 (468dpa), taking assumptions about lower and upper levels of supply. Supply must also be informed by issues such as impacts on landscape and the environment, the cumulative impact of development on landscape character/sensitivity, site capacity and the viability of new development in the area, having regard to the delivery of local housing needs. This has not been achieved through the Local Plan and there are concerns with the wide ranging housing figure identified.

When determining future local housing needs, LDC should prioritise the specific needs of local residents and consider the demographic shifts indicated by ONS and LDC studies. Notably, while the 'natural population' of Lewes is falling due to a declining birth rate, all predicted population growth is expected to come from older people (aged 65+) moving into the district from other parts of the UK. Therefore, LDC should consider setting the housing requirement at the lower end of the range to prioritise affordability and accessibility for both existing residents and the incoming elderly population.

In its study 'Living Longer: trends in subnational ageing across the UK', the ONS showcases a stark contrast in age profiles between Lewes (median age 48) and Brighton and Hove (median age 35). This aligns with the study's observation that older people tend to favour living near National Landscapes (Formerly Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), National Parks, and the coast, while younger generations gravitate towards city life. The study explains why Brighton, with its coastal location, two universities, and association with youth culture, is a magnet for young adults. Its modern atmosphere, vibrant professional scene, and trendy shops and restaurants further solidify its appeal. In contrast, Lewes, nestled in the South Downs National Park, charms with its historic town centre, castle, and idyllic countryside. Reflecting this demographic divide, only 10% of local authorities in England had a younger median age than Brighton and Hove in 2019, while just 13% were older than Lewes.

Though affordable housing is undoubtedly needed in Lewes District and across the UK, constructing vast swathes of new houses, most of which will be out of reach financially for many, in or near unsustainable rural villages with limited services and scant local employment is not a sustainable solution. It will simply attract more residents to car-dependent locations and fuel demand from older individuals (who would not quality to buy affordable housing due to their age) looking to relocate to Lewes District, ultimately pushing house prices further upwards.

Instead, LDC should prioritise development in existing towns and established larger & sustainable locations already equipped with better infrastructure and job opportunities.

Do you think there is an alternative settlement hierarchy that we should consider? If so, what is it?

The existing Settlement Hierarchy is appropriate. Cooksbridge in particular has very few services, next to no employment and only 160 houses. So its classification as a 'Local Village' is correct.

However, as a comment on the methodology used when assessing the settlement hierarchy, we do NOT consider one train an hour in either direction to be a 'frequent' train service. The Government's guidance for a 'frequent' bus service (in England & Wales excluding London) is at least every 10 minutes. Train service frequency is not defined in legislation. It is therefore a relative and subjective concept. For example, the hourly service at Cooksbridge should be contrasted to the 'frequent' service at Lewes station (5 trains per hour to Brighton) and at Haywards Heath station (6 trains per hour to Brighton, and 10 or more to London). Cooksbridge therefore has an *infrequent* train service which does not reduce car dependency or increase its relative sustainability.

To illustrate this point further, in the Rail Delivery Group's (RDG) 'Definitions of Rail Performance Metrics' document (October 2017) paragraph 4.2 defines a high frequency train service as one 'which the majority of passengers see as a "turn-up-and-go" service rather than relying on the timetable'. The RDG also provides an additional 'very high frequency' definition.

According to ONS statistics, only around 2% of residents of Lewes District travel to work by train. Lewes is a 7 minute car journey from Cooksbridge or Hamsey. An hourly train service cannot compete with that convenience and will not reduce car dependency. An additional train stopping at Cooksbridge (even if this were possible, which is extremely unlikely) would not reduce car use, but would have a severe impact on the A275 due to the level crossing barrier being down across the A275 for even longer periods.

A consequence of this and of more houses north of the railway line, would be severe congestion on the A275 (the only possible access point for the site) towards Lewes and Brighton (the nearest towns) at the level crossing, in turn driving traffic into the narrow rural lanes of Hamsey Lane, North End Lane and the Drove, overwhelming and destroying their character.

Even more time? Have a greater impact and complete the whole questionnaire

If you have time, we would encourage you to respond to the whole of the 'Towards a Lewes Local Plan: Spatial Strategy and Policy Directions' questionnaire (the first questionnaire).

[FULL QUESTIONNAIRE](#)

Due to our limited resources, we are unfortunately not in a position to provide guidance on every question within this questionnaire.

As a reminder, **links** to key consultation documents are here:

- The main consultation document, **Towards a Lewes Local Plan: Spatial Strategy and Policy Directions** is here: [MAIN POLICY DOCUMENT](#)
- The LAA assessment of the Cooksbridge/Hamsey site (19HY) is on page 9 of the Large Site Assessment document [LARGE SITE ASSESSMENT GO TO PAGE 9](#)
- The AECOM Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of the Cooksbridge/Hamsey site (19HY) is on page 26 of this document [LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT - GO TO PAGE 26](#)
- The Hamsey Parish site map, showing the site 19HY is here: [HAMSEY SITE MAP](#)

Having Problems?

If you are having difficulty registering or filling out the online questionnaires, you can instead fill out the document attached. You can then upload to the council's website (link below) or email it with your comments to LocalPlan@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk - or print and send by post to: Lewes District Council, c/o Eastbourne Town Hall, Grove Road, Eastbourne, BN21 4UG.

https://planningpolicyconsult.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/LDC_PO_2023/respondByUpload

If this doesn't work for you, simply send an email to the Council (LocalPlan@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk) giving your views. Just ensure you include your **name and address**.

Please note:

Everyone in a household can comment separately. You do not need to live in the Parish. Please get your friends and family to comment. Please ensure your responses are based on and reflect your own views and words.

**Thank you for your continued support. Together we can help protect
our precious countryside from development,
by keeping it out of the Local Plan**