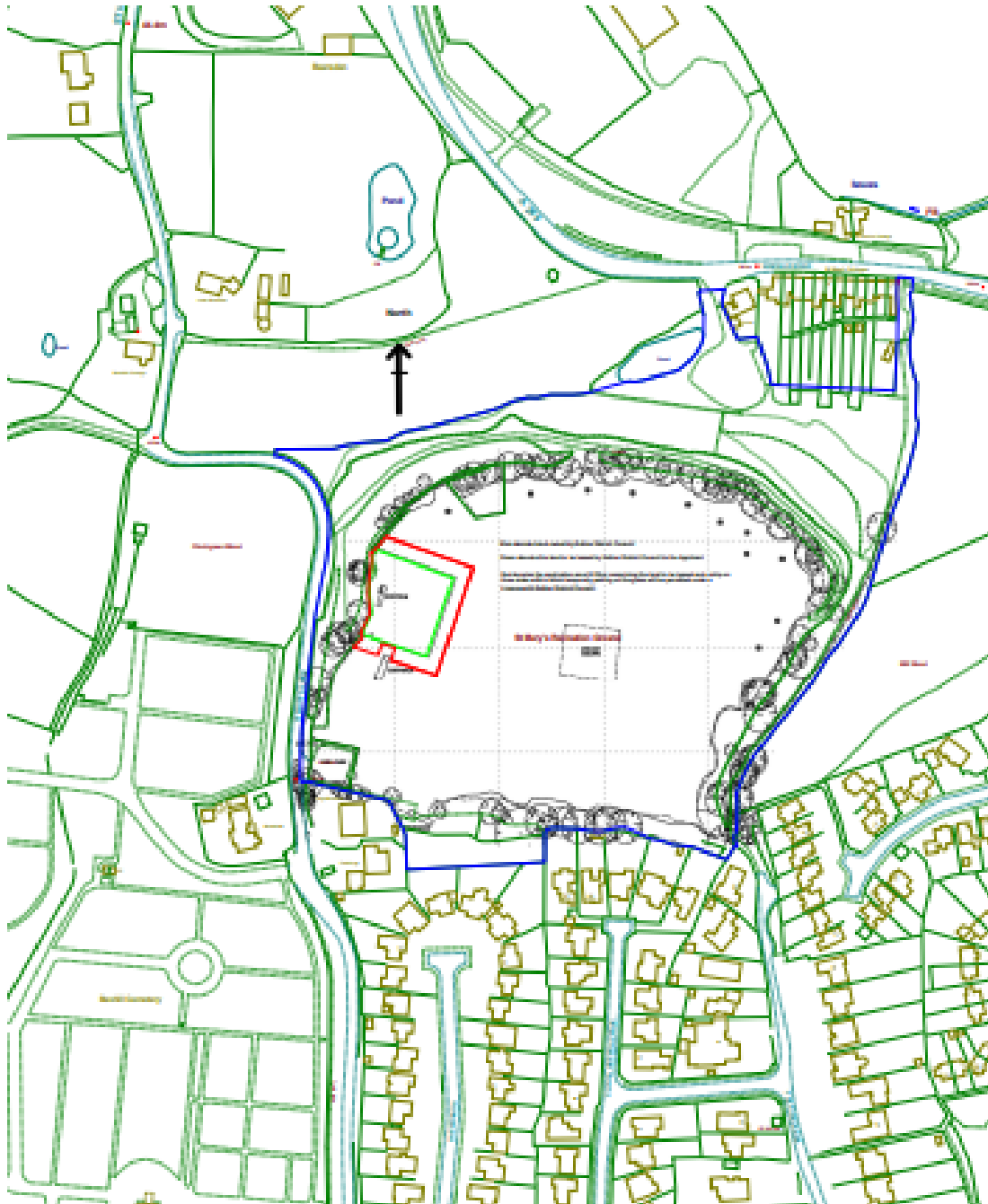


SITE PLAN

BEXHILL

RR/2023/1804/P

St. Marys Recreation Ground  
Bexhill



## Rother District Council

Report to	-	Planning Committee
Date	-	14 December 2023
Report of the	-	Director – Place and Climate Change
Subject	-	Application RR/2023/1804/P
Address	-	St Marys Recreation Ground, Bexhill
Proposal	-	Construction of an electric model race car track, rostrum and siting of a shipping container for storage.

[View application/correspondence](#)

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**RECOMMENDATION:** It be **RESOLVED** to **GRANT (FULL PLANNING)**

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**Director: Ben Hook**

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<b>Applicant:</b>	<b>Mr Andrew Coley</b>
<b>Agent:</b>	<b>Mr Andrew Coley</b>
<b>Case Officer:</b>	<b>Mrs Harriet Beckett</b>

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<b>Parish:</b>	<b>BEXHILL SIDLEY</b>
<b>Ward Members:</b>	<b>Councillors F.H. Chowdhury and S.J. Coleman</b>

**Reason for Committee consideration: Council Owned Land**

**Statutory 8-week date: 16 November 2023**  
**Extension of time agreed to: 21 December 2023**

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### **1.0 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The proposed electric race car track would complement the existing recreation facility along St. Mary's Lane. It would not detract from the rural character and appearance of the locality, would not adversely impact on the living conditions of occupiers of nearby residential properties and there are no highway safety concerns. The recommendation is to grant permission subject to the imposed conditions.
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### **2.0 SITE**

- 2.1 This application relates to St. Mary's Recreation Ground, a large open space located on the eastern side of St. Mary's Lane. The site is outside the Development Boundary for Bexhill and is within the countryside. It is not within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

- 2.2 The Recreation Ground itself is grassland offering general open amenity space with a hardstanding near the access providing parking facilities for visitors.
- 2.3 The nearest neighbouring property is High Beeches which is located some 77m to the south.
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### **3.0 PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 This application seeks planning permission on a permanent basis for the construction of an electric car racetrack and siting of a shipping container for storage, for the land use of the track for 1066 Racing. 1066 Racing is an off-road radio-controlled car racing club. The Club would race '1/10th scale RC cars'. 1066 Racing is a member of the British Radio Car Association (BRCA), who provide rules, regulations, safety recommendations for venues and crucially Public Liability insurance.
- 3.2 The area of land for the track, rostrum and container would be positioned approximately 53.5m northeast of the hardstanding of St. Mary's Recreation Ground car park, as previously approved.
- 3.3 The elements within the application for the land use of the track for 1066 Racing:
- i. A flat track measuring approximately 40m x 40m of the grass surface within a fenced area (maintained by 1066 Racing).
  - ii. A timber constructed rostrum, raised area for drivers to view/track/control their cars.
  - iii. A shipping container clad in wood providing a secure place to store club equipment, including that to maintain the land.

The application provides details of days/hours of operating, attendance, proposed parking arrangements and a risk assessment document.

#### **3.4 Usage**

- 3.4.1 The proposed usage for club meetings would be a Sunday morning for a maximum of five hours, from 9am until 2pm and on one weekday evening during the summer months, after 5pm until sundown. The track would not be lit, evening meetings would only take place during summer months. The track would remain open at other times for local use (electric only) RC cars, this would be anticipated to be very minimal use. As well as the use on Saturday or Sunday for an all-day event, 9am to 6pm for four times only during the summer months, for bigger events.

#### **3.5 Attendees**

- 3.5.1 There would be between 15 and 25 competitors, potentially 30 at a busy meeting – it should be noted the indoor events attract the most attendees rather than outdoor occasions. It is proposed that 20 vehicles would be at a busy outdoor meeting but often this would be lower.

### 3.6 Parking

- 3.6.1 It is proposed that 20-25 parking spaces of 3m x 5m would be positioned on the grass on three sides of the proposed racetrack. Parking would be authorised under an annual licence issued by Rother District Council (RDC). Access to the parking spaces would be across the grass from the existing hardstanding car park, a club representative would be on hand to oversee the arrival and departure of all vehicles attending.
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## 4.0 HISTORY

- 4.1 RR/2021/2252/P Construction of an electric race car track and siting of a shipping container for storage. APPROVED  
CONDITIONAL
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## 5.0 POLICIES

- 5.1 The following policies of the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 are relevant to the proposal:
- OSS4: General Development Considerations
  - RA3: Development in the Countryside
  - BX1: Overall strategy for Bexhill
  - EN1: Landscape Stewardship
  - EN3: Design Quality
- 5.2 The following policies of the Development and Site Allocations Local Plan are relevant to the proposal:
- DEN1: Maintaining Landscape Character
- 5.3 The National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance are also material considerations.
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## 6.0 CONSULTATIONS

### 6.1 Environmental Health – NO OBJECTION

- 6.1.1 As the Applicant's submitted briefing note explains, there are potential ground gas issues with this site. A previous application (RR/2022/830/P) for a temporary container to be used as a 'portable changing facility' on St Mary's Recreation Ground included the submission of a Remediation Statement prepared by Land Science (their ref: LS 6932, 9 June 2023). That report was prepared for RDC and recommended the provision of a ventilated gap beneath the container and the installation of a hydrocarbon vapour and ground gas membrane. Although the report does not cover the precise location identified for the storage container covered by this current application its recommendations still have some relevance in this case.
- 6.1.2 Provided the use of the proposed container is limited to storage purposes, rather than for a use that is likely to involve people remaining within it for any significant length of time, it should be sufficiently protected from any infiltration

of ground gasses by ensuring that it is raised off the ground, for example on bricks or slabs, and is provided with some permanent passive air vents, top and bottom of the container sides. I am not aware of any complaints having arisen from the current use by 1066 Racing which appears to present no significant noise impacts and has no requirement for artificial lighting; consequently, I have no adverse observations on the proposed use.

6.2 Environment Agency – **NO COMMENTS RECEIVED**

6.3 Planning Notice

6.3.1 Four letters of objection have been received. The reasons are summarised as follows:

- A shipping container would be an eyesore as well as noise in a residential area.
- Additional traffic level of local traffic and noise pollution from the electric car track.
- Reduces space on the Recreation Ground.
- A container on the site would not want that on our green space.
- Concerns in relation to parking on grass.
- Insufficient parking means overspill onto local residential roads.
- Lack of toilet facilities.

6.3.2 29 letters of support have been received. The reasons are summarised as follows:

- Model citizens.
- No noise, no rubbish left behind and mindful of the Recreation Ground.
- Brilliant facility locally for all the family to enjoy.
- It is great to have an outdoor track, good size and well maintained.
- Provides a space for quality time in the fresh air.
- Great opportunity for people to take part and good to see the grounds being used as well.
- The track provides an inclusive and friendly nature of the sport.
- Cars are quiet and it is fun to watch them race around the track.
- Great activity bringing all ages together.
- Great club full of nice welcoming people who maintain the track area very well.
- Great hobby for kids to get together outside and build relationships and engineering and making skills.
- Electric cars are awesome pieces of kit and make very little noise at all.
- A brilliant addition to St Mary's Recreation Ground activities.
- We can all share the space easily without any problems as the test planning period has proven.
- Just like the cricket and many dog walks who use the field it adds to sense of local community which for all our benefit.
- Fantastic opportunity for the community and a good use of land that is otherwise left empty.

6.4 Neighbourhood Services – **SUPPORT**

6.4.1 1066 Racing has used St. Mary's Recreation Ground without issue since securing temporary planning consent. The activity of racing the electric cars is virtually silent. No complaints in relation to noise or any other aspect of the

activity have been received by RDC's Neighbourhood Services whose remit includes the management and maintenance of the Recreation Ground. St. Mary's Recreation Ground has been little used in recent years, except for dog walking. The return of cricket through the admirable efforts of Sidley Cricket Club and the introduction of the car racing facility has increased the value of this open space to the community and attracted a wider range of beneficiaries without detriment to the existing site users. There is plentiful space for all the activities to be safely and comfortably accommodated and no legitimate reason why the operating hours cannot be extended as with other activities at other public parks and open spaces within the district. The proposed container will be sited close to the treeline and will have minimal visual impact. In the longer term at least one of the other existing containers is likely to be removed. It would be useful to have more detail on the proposed 'lean to' roof for the rostrum, not least to see that the potential for unsupervised children and young people to climb on it and potentially come to harm has been considered. It is reasonable to expect this may happen outside of the times the facility is legitimately in use by 1066 Racing. It may be worthwhile considering whether a temporary covering can be used as and when needed and stored, outside of these times, in the container.

## 6.5 Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council – **NO OBJECTION**

6.5.1 It was resolved to support this application.

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## 7.0 **APPRAISAL**

7.1 The main issues for consideration are the provision of the recreation space for an electric car racing use and its effect on the locality and the impacts upon neighbouring and nearby properties.

7.1.1 The provision of the 1066 Racing use to the area of land on the recreation site and its effect on the locality.

7.1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework at Section 8 sets out the planning objective of 'promoting healthy and safe communities. At paragraph 93 it says that to provide the social and recreational facilities and services the community needs, planning decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities sports venues, open space, and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments. It adds that, decisions should take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, and social well-being for all sections of the community, and guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs. In terms of 'open space and recreation', at paragraph 98 it states that access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change. Paragraph 99 goes on to say that existing open space, sports and recreational land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless specified criteria are met, including: the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or (c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational

provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use. Section 12. 'achieving well designed places' at paragraph 130 (f) requires that planning decisions should ensure that developments create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

- 7.1.3 Rother Local Core Strategy Policy BX1(ii): includes within the 'overall strategy for Bexhill' the objective of delivering development of local amenities, including support for community activities and facilities, and improved sports and leisure facilities.
- 7.1.4 Policy EN1 provides protection for the landscape character of the area, whilst Policy EN3 requires all development to be of a high-quality design.
- 7.1.5 St. Mary's Lane is rural in character with scattered residential properties which generally occupy large sites. The lane is lined with hedges and trees. The Recreation Ground is a large open space with trees lining the boundary of the ground, an area of grassland with a small section of fenced hard standing to the southwest providing visitors parking.
- 7.1.6 The application relates to an existing recreation ground and no loss of the area of the Recreation Ground would be proposed under this application. The facilities would not impact on the existing areas on the Recreation Ground. The application does, however, include the loss of an area some 40m x 40m of informal amenity grassland within the Recreation Ground that would be taken up by the development of the space with a track positioned on the grassland and the specific facilities included within the fenced area (a rostrum and shipping container). Consequently, a different kind of recreation experience would be created within those areas, on the operating days/times proposed. The development would be of similar nature to community meetings we would see at the existing recreation ground, including football, cricket matches and as such the nature of the activity would remain similar to a recreation ground. As such it is considered this use would be acceptable to the area within this recreation ground.
- 7.1.7 The area of land where the 1066 racing facilities is positioned approximately 53.5m to the north of the hardstanding area of the Recreation Ground, against the west side boundary. Within this area, the flat track approximately 40m x 40m has a grass surface, the track being laid on top, enclosed within a 1.2m high fence along its boundary. This area includes the addition of a rostrum structure and a shipping container for storage. The rostrum would measure 15m in length with a platform width of 1.5m and platform height of 1.4m and a rail height of 2.5m. The rostrum would also include a proposed lean-to roof on the driver stand, in order to stop the sun from affecting participants eyes. The shipping container would measure 2.4m in width by 6.05m in depth with a height of 2.4m. Materials would consist of timber for the rostrum and green wood clad to the shipping container, with the track to be laid on the grass surface.
- 7.1.8 The structures are positioned next to each other within the area of land, and therefore the land used for the 1066 racing would be read as part of a group of structures and would not read as an encroachment into the countryside. The area of land would be served by the existing access to St. Mary's Recreation Ground. The scale and design of the structures proposed are of a

simple nature, in keeping with the locality and of sympathetic materials as to not have a harmful impact visually or physically on the character and appearance of this rural location.

- 7.1.9 Given the countryside location, it would be essential to put controls in place to ensure that the use would be operating within approved limits. It would therefore be necessary to impose conditions to manage the use and operating times.
- 7.1.10 Overall, it is considered that the proposed permanent land use and relevant structures would be appropriately sited and would be of an acceptable use, scale and design as to not adversely impact the character and locality of the Recreation Ground and surrounding area.

## 7.2. **Residential Amenity**

- 7.2.1 Policy OSS4 (ii) of the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy says that all development should not unreasonably harm the amenities of adjoining properties. With regard to the proposal, the potential for impacts on residential amenity would principally be in terms of any noise impacts and secondly, any significant amounts of intrusive light affecting neighbouring properties as a result of the operation of any proposed lighting. In relation to these matters Policy DEN7 (environmental pollution) of the DaSA Local Plan is relevant. This says that development will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impacts on health, local amenities or environmental character. There is no proposed lighting within this application. In relation to noise, it says that consideration will also be given to the character of the location and established land uses. The application submission includes details of the proposed electric car to be used and the fact there would be little to no noise as demonstrated within the existing use of the 1066 racing track, Environmental Health has been consulted on the proposals.
- 7.2.2 Regarding the issue of potential noise: the site is within a recreation ground environment. With residential dwellings scattered along St. Mary's Lane, its nearest dwelling being approximately 77m in distance to the site (High Beeches). The existing use of the site is as a recreation ground and therefore neighbouring residents will be aware of existing activity and background noise characteristics associated with the existing uses. These may be more noticeable at times than others, such as when a football/cricket match is being held. With regard to the proposed development the noise of the electric radio-controlled racing cars appears to be little to none. This has been demonstrated following the approval of the temporary previous permission, with use of the track during the summer months of 2023; there have been no noise complaints. Environmental Health have also confirmed in its consultation response that they are not aware of any complaints risen from the current use by 1066 Racing which appears to present no significant noise impacts and has no requirement for artificial lighting with the cars and this has resulted in a no objection to this proposal. The Recreation Ground appears to have been used for both football and cricket in the past with an advertised provision for two junior pitches. As such it is considered there continues to be no adverse impacts on the residential amenities of nearby or neighbouring properties.



- 7.2.3 The area of land would be positioned a significant distance from any neighbouring property and would not directly impact on their amenities. In terms of additional traffic and activity, the proposal is for the use of the land for a maximum of five hours on a Sunday morning, 9am until 2pm and on one weekday evening during summer months only, after 5pm until sundown, as previously permitted. As well as the use on a Saturday or Sunday for an all-day event, 9am to 6pm for up to four times only during the summer months. Within the application there would be the provision of parking spaces surrounding three sides of the fenced area with this in place and the proposed estimated numbers it is considered that it would not generate significant levels of traffic/nor parking issues to St. Mary's Lane.

### **7.3 OTHER ISSUES**

#### **7.3.1 Highway safety and parking**

- 7.3.2 Policy CO6 of the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy facilitates a safe physical environment by (ii) ensuring that all development avoids prejudice to road and/or pedestrian safety.

- 7.3.3 Policy TR4 (i) of the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy requires development to meet the residual needs of the development for off-street parking having taken into consideration localised circumstances and having full regard to the potential for access by means other than the car, and to any safety, congestion or amenity impacts of a reliance on parking off-site whether on-street or off-street.

- 7.3.4 The site is served by an existing vehicular access. Traffic speeds are generally low along the lane and therefore the operating use proposed should not increase hazards on the highway. There is adequate space on site to park and turn multiple vehicles, specifically the proposed addition of parking spaces surrounding the racetrack on the grassland (on submission and approval of a parking licence) would provide sufficient space for the proposed vehicles attending the meetings regularly.

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## **8.0 PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The proposal of the provision of a permanent permission for the 1066 Racing area and the structures would not detract from the locality of the Recreation Ground and would not adversely impact on the nearby neighbouring residential properties and would not prejudice highway safety. The proposal complies with Rother Local Plan Core Strategy policies together with the various provisions contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and can therefore be supported and granted full planning subject to the expiry of the re-consultation period currently taking place for the amended plans and details.

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## **RECOMMENDATION: GRANT (FULL PLANNING)**

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and details:  
Location Plan: RC racetrack at St. Mary's Recreation Ground dated 20/09/2023;  
Block plan: radio-controlled car track area and parking dated 20/09/2023;  
East/North Elevation 'Drivers' Stand / Rostrum submitted 29/08/2023;  
Site East/North Elevation submitted 29/08/2023;  
Shipping Container Elevations submitted 29/08/2023;  
1066 Racing parking/vehicle access and movement plan detail submitted 09/02/2022;  
Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.
3. The use hereby permitted shall only take place on the following days and hours:
  - a) On one weekday evening per week and shall cease before sundown.
  - b) On Sundays only between 9am – 2pm.
  - c) On up to four individual weekend days per year between the 9am to 6pm.Reason: To safeguard the amenities of the locality in accordance with Policy OSS4 (ii) of the Rother District Local Plan Core Strategy and Policy DEN7 of the Rother Development and Site Allocations Local Plan.
4. The race car track hereby permitted shall only be used by electric remote-control vehicles and shall not be used by petrol or other fuel powered remote control vehicles.  
Reason: To protect the living conditions of occupiers of nearby residential properties and to protect the rural character of the locality in accordance with Policies OSS4 (ii) (iii) and RA3 of the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy and Policy DEN7 of the Rother Development and Site Allocations Local Plan.
5. No floodlighting or other external means of illumination of the racetrack hereby permitted shall be provided, installed or operated at the site.  
Reason: To protect the residential amenities of the locality and to protect the special character of the rural area, in accordance with Policies OSS4 (ii and iii), RA3 (v) and EN1 of the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy and Policies DEN1 and DEN7 of the Rother Development and Site Allocations Local Plan.

**NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK:** In accordance with paragraph 38 of the National Planning Policy Framework the Council has worked in a positive and pro-active way and has imposed planning conditions to enable the grant of planning permission.