



5 December 2018

To the Planning Policy Team at Rother District Council:

Objection to allocation for housing on sites BEC1 and BEC2 in the Rother District Council's Development Sites and Allocations Plan ("the DASA")

I am Matthew Horton. I am a barrister in private practice, being a member of 39 Essex Chambers in central London. My chambers are acknowledged as one of the country's leading sets, specialising in various fields, including Town and Country Planning, in which I specialise. I was called to the Bar in 1969 and was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1989.

I live with my wife and our children in King's Bank Lane, Beckley. We purchased our house in 1991 and have lived in it as our main residence since 1999. We own also some one hundred acres surrounding our house, including an adjoining farm yard and an oast house which we have restored and we let out as tourist accommodation.

I have always taken an active interest in village affairs. From time to time I have assisted, at its request, the Beckley Parish Council in relation to development proposals in the village.

Several years ago, my wife and I purchased a one hectare field in the village in Whitbread Lane (known as the Old Vineyard) in the belief that it was likely that further housing development would be required in the village and that, having regard to proper planning considerations, the best place to locate it would be on the Old Vineyard. Since then I have sought to bring that land forward in the Local Plan, together with, if need be, adjoining land owned by other villagers of long standing. The land fronts the A268 within the thirty mile an hour speed limit in the village. Opposite the land along that road are individual dwellings; on the same side as our land to the east, the land adjoins dwellings along the A268. The land itself has never been developed. To build on it would extend westwards the internal envelope of development in the village so as to consolidate the existing development around the junction of the A268 and Main Street and bring it closer to the existing linear development in the village between the land and the western end of the village.

It is necessary to describe the suitability of our land for development because, if sites BEC1 and BEC 2 are found to be unsuitable, other land will have to be allocated. Based on decades

of experience acting for and against proposed housing developments in towns and villages throughout England, it is my judgement that our land is far more suitable for development for housing than sites BEC1 and BEC2 or any other site in the village. That is not serendipitous; we bought our land having evaluated it as suitable for further housing in the village.

My analysis of the unsuitability of sites BEC1 and BEC2 were set out in my letter dated 20th February 2017, objecting to the Options and Preferred Options version of the DaSA. I attach a further copy of that letter and I rely on its contents as remaining, mutatis mutandis, valid and coherent objections to the allocation of sites BEC1 and BEC2. Contrary to my objection in 2017, RDC's proposal for site BEC1 has been altered by increasing the extent to which it will extend the village envelope at its eastern end but, in part accordance with my objection, the size of BEC2 has been reduced by confining it to the land owned by the Beckley Parish Council behind the existing Buddens Green development.

It is my contention that it is contrary to proper planning principles to allocate any part of the revised BEC2 for the outstanding reasons given in section 2(iii) of my letter dated 20th February 2017 (some of my original reasons no longer apply by virtue of RDC having reduced the extent of the site, presumably to reflect its acceptance of the correctness of those reasons).

I contend that the allocation of the site BEC1 is also contrary to proper planning principles. The RDC seeks to justify it on the basis that it is "*brownfield land*", but the greater part of it is "*greenfield*" and would extend the village envelope externally into open countryside in a manner that would not arise if our land were to be allocated, so as to create an internal consolidation of the existing form of the village. Furthermore, that part of BEC1 which is brownfield, comprising the building formerly occupied by Manroy Engineering, is an important asset to be safeguarded for employment development. Manroy has enjoyed the benefit of so using that land for many years and can properly be expected to accept that the land use should continue to be safeguarded in the interests of the proper planning of the village.

I understand that objections to the DaSA will be considered at a public inquiry in due course. At that inquiry I wish to present my objections to the allocation of sites BEC1 and BEC2 for housing.

Yours faithfully,

Matthew Horton QC