

Report – Long Man PC - Monday 11th March 2024

1) Southern Water - failings

Southern Water (which is responsible for wastewater and sewerage treatment across the Wealden district) had agreed to attend a meeting arranged to address concerns across Wealden including flooding, sewage seeping into people's homes, gardens and roads, the ongoing problem of discharges into rivers and waterways and the inability to deal with additional development. Shortly before Christmas Southern Water officials withdrew their agreement to attend the meeting

Wealden District Council and two dozen other local authorities have pledged to keep the pressure up on Southern Water and to hold it to account for constant failings.

OFWAT has pledged to work closely with Local Authorities to hold Southern Water to account and ensure that infrastructure pledge are actually honoured.

2) Wealden Community Sports Hub given planning permission

Full planning permission for the development of a new sports hub facility in Hellingly has been given the green light.

The new 20 acre sports hub will include two full size floodlit artificial pitches, two multi-use games areas (MUGAs) (containing four dual floodlit tennis/netball courts), two padel tennis courts, skate park, play facilities and a sports building providing changing rooms, toilets and café, alongside parking, landscaping, drainage, ancillary works and vehicular access via the A267.

The state-of-the-art hub will also accommodate 206kWp solar array of photovoltaic (PV) panels over the parking spaces in the main car park - 60 spaces will have the ability to provide electric car charging with 20 spaces fitted with active chargers from the outset with the remaining 40 passive spaces being capable of being brought into use as and when demand requires to plan for future increase in uptake.

The sports hub will be accessible by a new pedestrian and cycling access, which will also connect the site to the Cuckoo Trail. Bus routes will be enhanced to provide public transport links to the facility.

As I have mentioned before the original £5m or so costs projection has now been topped up with some £8m from CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) monies but the project has not been fully costed and total costs are not known. I have no doubt that they will escalate beyond £13m

The full application, with a layout plan outlining the proposed development is available below.

<https://council.wealden.gov.uk/documents/s85815/WD20232100DC%20-%20LAND%20AT%20KNIGHTS%20FARM%20EAST%20LOWER%20HORSEBRIDGE%20HAILSHAM.pdf>

3) Draft Local Plan

At an Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 8th February it was decided that the draft local plan be released for public consultation. This will commence in March and run for 8 weeks. There will be a virtual exhibition and drop-in sessions. The link is <https://consult.wealden.gov.uk/kse/>

The plan allows for 15,729 new homes to be built by March 2040
Consultation dates are from 5p.m. Friday 15th March to 5 p.m. Friday 10th May.

4) Council Tax

The WDC element of the Council Tax increase was approved at 2.99% for 2024/25 (the maximum permitted and the same as last year). Wealden District Council receives 9% of Council Tax collected..... this pays for refuse and recycling collections, planning, street cleaning, environmental protection, and ‘free car parking’ (a strange statement by the Council possibly a precursor to the introduction of parking charges across WDC ??)

The remainder of the Council Tax Bill is shared to pay for a wide range of services provided by ESCC (Sussex Police, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Services and local town and Parish Councils etc)

At the time of this meeting Council Tax Bills have just arrived so tax payers will now be aware of the full impact of overall increases for 2024/25.

David Greaves

11th March 2024