**Key Issues**

Due to a significant number of new houses having been consented on the outskirts of the village of Hassocks in recent years, the allocation of the site was a contentious decision locally. More than 500 people turned out for the site’s hearing session in the local plan examination, the majority in opposition.

The 30ha application site is currently undeveloped, comprising a series of large arable fields. The western boundary is formed by a strip of woodland adjacent to the London to Brighton railway line. A public right of way bisects the site, before crossing the railway line at an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing.

To the south of the site is the residential area of Mackie Avenue and an area of public open space associated with a new housing development. There are a few residential properties on Ockley Lane to the east of the site, including the grade II* listed Ockley Manor and associated grade II listed barn and dovecote.

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**Purpose of the project**

Gleesons Strategic Land is seeking outline planning permission for residential development on land to the north of Mackie Avenue, Hassocks, West Sussex. The application site is allocated in the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (adopted March 2018).

The final scheme will provide a mix of much needed market and affordable housing, alongside land for a new primary school.

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**Description of the project**

The proposal is for up to 500 new residential dwellings and land for a two-form entry primary school and community building, in addition to land for a bridleway link between Hassocks and Burgess Hill and associated infrastructure (informal open space, landscaping, sustainable drainage and site access). The proposal also provides improved pedestrian access across the railway line.
Lessons learnt

Engagement with key stakeholders
Given the contentious nature of the site’s allocation in the local plan, undertaking robust and extensive consultation was critical.

This started with a workshop session to help inform the design of the proposal, to which 49 key local individuals / organisations were invited. The subsequent public exhibition was visited by 255 people. The main concerns were access and traffic, the potential safety implications of the uncontrolled rail crossing and the potential effect on the adjacent listed buildings.

A number of individual meetings were then held with local residents who had raised specific issues. Additionally, specific consultation was undertaken with the South Downs National Park Authority and Historic England.

Cumulative sites
Land to the west of the site (Friars Oak), beyond the railway line was being promoted for residential development (not an allocated site) during the pre and post application stages of the Clayton Mills scheme.

Lessons learnt cont. –
Whilst the original Friars Oak application was refused, this was successfully appealed. Alongside the appeal, a second (revised) application was submitted, which was consented.

In the Clayton Mills ES, the Friars Oak scheme was considered cumulatively for all topics except traffic and transport as this seemed a robust approach given the uncertainties around the determination timescale. However, the traffic consultant had not specifically included the scheme as it was not a ‘committed development’ at the time the Clayton Mills submission. As such this had to be included post-submission.

Post submission changes to the scheme
During the post-submission consultation period it became clear that a number of very minor changes to the red line were required following a query over landownership and mitigation (visual screening) for the Ockley Manor listed buildings.

Two ES addenda were submitted to cover the post-submission changes.

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