

**WEST HOATHLY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
OPEN Q&A SESSION MONDAY 3rd FEBRUARY 2014**

Questions for landowners – Statement on behalf of Bluebell Railway Plc

Rail Estate on behalf of its client, Bluebell Railway Plc, wrote to the Parish Clerk of West Hoathly Parish Council on 29th November last year in response to enquiries concerning the availability and suitability of land owned by Bluebell Railway for housing development on the site of the former West Hoathly station and goods yard. Our response can be viewed on the Hoathly Hub website.

Previous representations had been made in 2006 by Rail Estate, on behalf of Bluebell Railway Plc, to Mid Sussex District Council's draft Small Scale Housing Allocations DPD, in which a proposal was put forward to include 15 residential units on the former station and goods yard site at the foot of Hamsey Road and Station Road in Sharpthorne. Part of the site fell within the Sharpthorne village development envelope and the remainder on the former goods yard which is agreed as previously developed brownfield land outside the village development envelope.

Since the conclusion of the Inspector's Inquiry into the Small Scale Housing Allocations DPD, March 2007, Bluebell Railway has obtained full conditional planning consent for 5 traditional railway-style residential units (3 x two bedroom flats and 2 x three bedroom semi-detached houses) within the village development envelope. Plans are currently in hand to discharge the pre-construction planning conditions and to implement this planning consent.

The Bluebell Railway acknowledges the potential of land within its ownership at West Hoathly to contribute towards local housing needs on a site of approximately 0.5 hectare. The land is currently in operational use and includes land reserved for a future station halt platform, should it be required in the future. Should this land be released by the Bluebell Railway for development purposes, then in answer to the questions posed for owners to address at the public event on 3rd February we would make the following observations.

Concept of Development

In keeping with the precedent set by the planning permission already obtained for part of the site, it is envisaged that any residential development would be in keeping with, and evocative of, the historic, local, railway style architecture and would include further cottages and houses clustered in the southern half of the goods yard off Station Road and adjacent to the consented cottages off Hamsey Road.

Numbers and Types of Dwellings

There is potential for two semi-detached cottages off Hamsey Road and eight three/four bedroom detached, semi-detached and terraced houses in the former goods yard. The Hamsey Road houses would be developed within the village development envelope.

Timescale and Phasing of Development

Subject to the land being declared surplus to the operational requirements of the Bluebell Railway, it is envisaged that plans for the two Hamsey Road units could be brought forward quickly. Plans for housing development in the former goods yard would be brought forward

dependent upon the phased release of the land and the relocation of operational activities to other sites on the railway.

Highways Issues

Access to the development sites would be directly from Hamsey Road, via a crossover, and from a continuation of Station Road. Both are publicly adopted roads.

Community Benefit

Apart from the normal benefits associated with a high quality housing development, any scheme will make community provision as required under the adopted mid Sussex District Council Local Plan. This will be achieved either by planning conditions or by a Section 106 planning agreement and/or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Due to the nature of the site, extensive tree planting and landscaping is envisaged and an open area is to be reserved for access to, and the potential provision of, a station halt within the site. Depending upon the amount of residential units applied for, there may well be an element of affordable housing provided as part of the scheme, subject to discussions with the local planning authority.

Site Specific Issues – Proposed Layout

It is premature to present a fully detailed proposal at this time. If the site is released for development by Bluebell Railway, then it is likely that a cluster of housing of up to eight units would be planned for the southernmost part of the goods yard with a mixture of terraced, semi-detached and detached houses with gardens around an open landscaped area. Space would be left for access to a potential station halt including a platform and small car parking/servicing area. It is not intended to extend development into the northernmost part of the goods yard or into the area of ancient woodland to the west of the goods yard and wherever appropriate the development will retain any former features of the goods yard such as the loading dock etc.

The residential development off Hamsey Road and within the village envelope would consist of two semi-detached railway-style cottages adjacent to the already consented development. Access would be from a crossover at the foot of Hamsey Road into a common driveway.