

Contact:

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Date:

17th August 2016

Dear Inspector,

Mid Sussex District Plan

It is with great pleasure that after considerable work I enclose a copy of our proposed Mid Sussex District Plan for examination, along with a number of supporting documents and the representations received during public consultation in forming the Plan. I would like to take this opportunity to explain the background to you, and set out briefly what we are trying to achieve in the District Plan.

In the summer of 2010 the newly formed Coalition Government announced the revocation of the regional strategies and confirmed that local planning authorities would be “responsible for establishing the right level of local housing provision in their area”. The Localism Act came into force in 2011 and embedded the new planning system in legislation. It seeks to allow local communities to shape the future of their local areas and introduced a new power for local communities to produce neighbourhood plans.

In Mid Sussex we have fully embraced localism and are recognised as being at the forefront of neighbourhood planning. In particular we are keen to show that giving responsibility to local communities to determine what development is needed and where it should go will successfully deliver sustainable growth. The Council is supportive of sustainable growth and the planned growth at Burgess Hill is a select example of this.

The Council has produced robust evidence to determine our objectively assessed housing need in line with the NPPF and planning guidance. However, we actually propose to deliver in excess of this need to ensure that we support and grow our local economy, as there is no public support for Mid Sussex becoming a dormitory for neighbouring areas or merely a retirement destination.

However, we also know that the Plan must respect the unique characteristics that make Mid Sussex such an attractive place to live and work. These are based on our high quality natural and built environment and the distinctive history and heritage of our towns and villages. We are therefore proposing strong policies to facilitate growth, but at the same time protect these essential characteristics and to require high quality development so it can be truly sustainable.

When it comes to the location of development, we have looked to our local communities to take the lead in deciding where and how this should be delivered. For example, our major strategic development at Burgess Hill was initiated and driven by the Town Council, and continues to be developed in collaboration with the community. We have the highest number of neighbourhood plans being produced in the country, and have planned for about 20% of our housing requirement to be delivered through this new and exciting process.

Working together for a better Mid Sussex



Central to this has been the local concern that appropriate levels of infrastructure are delivered to support the sustainable development of the district. We have worked hard with all our town and parish councils, the County Council, Highways England and other relevant organisations to identify what infrastructure is required across Mid Sussex and, alongside the District Plan, we are proposing a Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule to help deliver it.

Finally, we are continually working with neighbouring authorities to ensure that cross-boundary issues are identified and joint solutions are agreed where it is sensible to do so. We are proposing to deliver higher housing numbers than are needed to meet our needs and to assist our neighbours in meeting their needs. However, we have had to balance the wish to grow our economy against the environmental constraints of our area, much of which is in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the South Downs National Park and/or is affected by proximity to Ashdown Forest, a European nature conservation site protected under the EC Habitats and Birds Directives.

The Council considers the District Plan, its supporting evidence base and the process under which it has been prepared to be legally compliant and sound. However, the Council takes this opportunity to formally request that the Inspector recommend any such modifications considered necessary to make the District Plan sound under Section 20(7C) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), including consideration of, and amendment to, the proposed modifications put forward by the Council as part of its submission.

In summary, the Council has worked very constructively with its partners and has produced a robust and clear plan that has significant public support. We therefore urge the Planning Inspectorate to look favourably on the Mid Sussex District Plan as a genuine example of how to implement the localism agenda and meet the challenge of the NPPF to plan positively for sustainable growth that meets the needs and aspirations of our communities.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Garry Wall', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Garry Wall
Leader of the Council