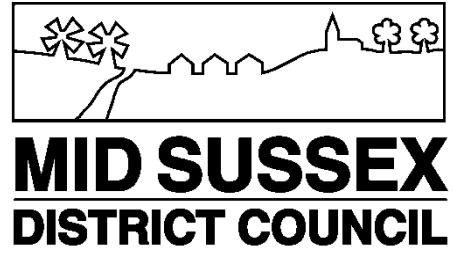


Mid Sussex District Council



Density Topic Paper

June 2016

1. Density Topic Paper

- 1.1 The focused amendments to the Pre-submission draft District Plan introduces a policy on density. The policy seeks a more efficient use of housing land, by introducing density thresholds. Policy DP24A (as amended by proposed modifications) states:

“In order to boost significantly the supply of housing, national planning policy requires local planning authorities to set out their approach to housing density to reflect local circumstances”.
- 1.2 An inevitable outcome of the inefficient use of land and low densities for new housing development is the potentially avoidable loss of open countryside beyond settlement boundaries. To address this concern, the Council’s approach will be to ensure that housing densities are as high as practicable without resulting in cramped forms of development or harm to the established character of surrounding areas.
- 1.3 Successful higher density development will depend upon a ‘design-led’ approach that respects its local context and minimises impacts on its surroundings.
- 1.4 Higher densities may not be achievable in those parts of suburban and village neighbourhoods where existing low density development contributes to a positive sense of place and community. Density may also be constrained by the need to retain key heritage assets in their settings and protect important landscape features.
- 1.5 On higher density development (40+ dwellings per hectare) special attention will need to be given to the layout and design of the scheme (see Policy DP24: Character and Design).
- 1.6 High density development in and close to the town centres and/or which are well served by public transport will normally be expected to make lower parking provision. Policy DP19: Transport requires adequate car parking to be provided for proposed developments in accordance with parking standards as agreed by the local planning authority or in accordance with the relevant neighbourhood plan.
- 1.7 Within the overall minimum density figures, developments on large sites will be expected to incorporate a wide range of densities, normally with the highest densities in the most accessible parts of the site and lower densities elsewhere, particularly where they lie adjacent to the rural edge.

2.0 District Plan Housing Density Policy

2.1 The District Plan Housing Density Policy is set out below:

DP24A: Housing Density

Strategic Objectives: 1) To promote development that makes the best use of resources and increases the sustainability of communities within Mid Sussex, and its ability to adapt to climate change; 2) To promote well located and designed development that reflects the District's distinctive towns and villages, and retains their separate identity and character; and 4) To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities.

Evidence Base: 'Urban Design Compendium', English Partnerships/The Housing Corporation, August 2000; Mid Sussex District Council analysis of densities achieved, November 2015

In order to make efficient use of land, residential development must provide for net residential densities of at least:

- 50 dwellings per hectare within the built-up area boundaries of Burgess Hill, East Grinstead and Haywards Heath;
- 40 dwellings per hectare on large sites with in excess of 5 hectares of developable land, including the strategic allocations in the District Plan; and
- 30 dwellings per hectare in all other locations.

Developments that do not make efficient use of land will not be permitted.

Lower densities will only be accepted where it can be adequately demonstrated that these are necessary in order to avoid harm to the established characteristics of the area and/or to residential amenity.

Net dwelling density is calculated by including only those site areas developed for housing and directly associated uses, including access roads within the site, private garden space, car parking areas, incidental open space and landscaping, and children's play areas, where these are provided.

In the case of mixed use schemes, the residential site area should be calculated using the total net site area apportioned between the various uses, on a pro rata basis (i.e. reducing the site area by the same ratio as that of the residential to non-residential floor space). However, in assessing density on mixed use sites, the council will be mindful of the overall benefits of the proposals.”

3.0 Justification of the inclusion of a density policy

National Guidance

3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework provides guidance on making efficient use of land and density. Paragraph 47 states:

“To boost significantly the supply of housing local planning authorities should:

- set out their own approach to housing density to reflect local circumstances

3.2 Paragraph 58 goes onto state:

“Local and neighbourhood Plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area.... Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments...

- optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development.....
- response to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation

3.3 Paragraph 59 states:

“...design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail but should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, **density**, massing...”

In December 2015 the government published a consultation on proposed changes to the NPPF. This included a question on the relating to the issue of density around transport hubs.

The inclusion of a policy within the District Plan that seeks efficient use of land and provides guidance on density requirements would be compliant with national policy.

4.0 Justification for the density thresholds

4.1 An assessment of densities on sites that have been developed in recent years has been undertaken to gain an understanding of the density of development in the District. Appendix 1 sets out a schedule of densities that have been achieved.

Sites within the built up area of towns

- 4.2 Town centre sites are usually previously developed sites which are developed for flatted schemes, which generate high density development. The introduction of permitted development rights for the conversion of offices to residential units has also lead to an increase of supply from this source, which usually results in higher density development.
- 4.3 On sites within the built up area, but outside the commercial centres, also often involve the redevelopment of previously developed sites. Again these types of development tend to result in higher density schemes. From the sites assessed the average density on windfall sites in this location was 113dph.
- 4.4 An analysis of the density of residential development within the town's has also been undertaken. The towns were divided up into broad character areas, focusing on the areas that are primarily residential. The density of the individual zone was calculated, using the number of address points within area of the zone. The calculation included areas of incidental open space and roads. Maps to show the zones are set out in Appendix 1.
- 4.5 East Grinstead was divided into 12 zones. There was no zone that had a density over 35 dph, only 2 areas with a density of 31-35 dph and a large part of the town being low density at 1 – 20 dph.
- 4.6 Burgess Hill was divided into 17 zones. There are 2 small zones, close to the town centre, that have density of 26 – 40 dph. A large part of the town is between 21 – 30 dph, with 2 areas being 1 - 20 dph.
- 4.7 Haywards Heath was divided into 16 zones, with lower density zones of 1 -20 dph on the northern and southern boundaries of the town. The western part of the town has density of 21 – 25 dph and the central part being 26 -30 dph.
- 4.8 This work shows that whilst individual sites that are developed within the town centres are usually done at a high density, the average density across the whole town is not high.
- 4.9 Therefore the policy proposes an average density of 50. This would still be an increase on the average density across the town, therefore encouraging a step change in the density of the town's, where redevelopment opportunities arise.

Strategic allocations

- 4.10 The policy proposes that the strategic sites should be developed at an average of 40 dph. It is important that strategic sites make the most efficient use of land. Large sites also provide an opportunity to achieve higher density along transport links and around the development centre, as well as a mix of units across the site.
- 4.11 The most recently developed strategic sites is Bolnore Village, Haywards Heath. The average density for this site is 35 dph. Density varies across the site, ranging from 17 dph to 44 dph.
- 4.12 It is acknowledged that an average density of 40 dph will be higher than what has been previously permitted on a strategic sites in Mid Sussex. However, there are examples from other District's where higher density development on strategic sites has been achieved. For example Cambridge Southern Fringe Area Action Plan required an average density of at least 50 dph, Emersons Green East Bristol requires an average of 50 dph and density ranges from 45 -31 dph. At the West of Bewbush, Crawley a large part of the site is being developed at 40 – 55 dph and strategic site at Broadbridge Heath is being developed at a density at 35 – 45 dph.

40 dwellings per hectare on large sites with in excess of 5 hectares of developable land

- 4.13 There are limited examples of development of sites in Mid Sussex that had in excess of 5 hectares of developable land. However it is considered that sites of this size will have the capacity to accommodate a mix of dwelling types and building sizes across the site and therefore have the potential to deliver at a higher density.

30 dwellings per hectare in all other locations

- 4.14 Analysis of permissions on sites that would fall into this category show that on allocated sites where there is a specified density the average density is 29 dph. This compares to an average of 22 dph on windfall sites. Therefore by having a specified density will require developers to give greater consideration to density and achieve a higher average density on sites coming forward from windfall sites.

5.0 Measuring density

- 5.1 Gross density includes all land within a residential area.

For the purposes of the policy the net density includes only the housing and directly associated uses:

- access roads within the site
- private garden space
- car parking areas
- incidental open space and landscaping
- children's play areas

It excludes:

- major distributor roads,
- schools
- open space serving a wider area and
- significant landscape and buffer strips

6.0 Application of policy

- 6.1 The aim of the policy is to boost significantly the supply of housing, seeking to ensure efficient use of land.
- 6.2 Starting point should be that a site can accommodate the prescribed density. Applicants would be required to demonstrate why the site cannot accommodate development in accordance with the policy, if they seek permission for a scheme that does not meet the requirements of the density policy.
- 6.3 Applicants will need to evidence the developable area of the site in accordance with the requirements of the policy.

Appendix 1- Table to show densities achieved on developments in Mid Sussex

	Density (units per hectare)	Type of Development		
70 Dwellings per hectare - Town centres				
33 -35 Cantelupe Road, East Grinstead	179	windfall		
Garland Court, East Grinstead	196	windfall		
Rentokil, Garland Road	95	windfall		
Milton House, Milton Road, Haywards Heath	400	windfall	Average	217
50 Dwellings per hectare - remaining BUA of towns				
St Margaret's, East Grinstead	25	allocated		
Maltings Park phase 1, Burgess Hill	31	allocated		
Maltings Park phase 2, Burgess Hill	25	allocated	Average	27
Wilmington Way, Haywards Heath	51	redevelopment		
St Luke's Church, Holtye Avenue	95	windfall		
Gower Road, Haywards Heath	165	windfall		
Sawyers Health Club, Boston Road, Haywards Heath	118	windfall		
69 Victoria Road, Burgess Hill	77	windfall	Average	113
45 dwellings per hectare - District Plan strategic allocations				
Bolnore village phase 1 -4a	38	allocated		
Bolnore village phase 4b and 5	28	allocated		
St Francis, parcel x	25	allocated		
St Francis, parcel y	30	allocated	Average	30
40 dwellings per hectare - large sites, 5 hectares plus				
Imberhorne Lane, East Grinstead (5.53ha)	20	windfall		
30 dwellings per hectare - other				
Adj Ashplatts House	27	allocated		
Clockfield, Turners Hill	24	allocated		
Folders Meadow, Burgess Hill	35	allocated		
Folders Lane, Burgess Hill	19	allocated		
Sandrocks, Rocky lane, Hayward Heath	35	allocated		
Grange Road, Crawley Down	26	allocated		
Chatfield Road, Cuckfield	30	allocated		
Gravelye Lane, Lindfield	30	allocated		
Newton Road, Lindfield	35	allocated	Average	29
Gravelye lane/Lyoth Lane, Lindfield	20	windfall		
North of Butlers Green Road, Haywards Heath	20	windfall		
Bylanes Close, Cuckfield	26	windfall		
Chalkers Lane, Hurstpierpoint	28	windfall		
Blackswan Close, Pease Pottage	18	windfall		
Woodlands Close, Crawley Down Phase 1	25	windfall	Average	22

Appendix 2 - Maps to show density zones in Burgess Hill, East Grinstead and Haywards Heath

