HEARING STATEMENT ON PROPOSED MAIN MODIFICATION MM60

On behalf of the Danworth Lane Action Group

INTRODUCTION

- This hearing statement is submitted on behalf of the Danworth Lane Action Group, comprising 37 residents of Danworth Lane and Chalkers Lane, objecting to proposed MM60. It endeavours to respond to some (but not all) of the specific agenda points raised by the Inspector.

A. MOVEMENT

Proposals for buses, cycling, wheeling and walking and connectivity between the two parcels, the town centre and the station

- Although the focus of this agenda point appears to be bus and active travel links east into Burgess Hill, it is plainly foreseeable that residents will also seek to access Hurstpierpoint through the western access point on Danworth Lane and to access Hassocks down Malthouse Lane.
- Bus travel down those lanes will be impossible given that they are single track with no passing points. Active travel will also be impossible down those lanes as for over 1km it is a single track with no pavement or verge, and private residences on both sides (so there is no possibility of widening the road or installing pavements or a bike lane, or even providing passing points for cars). Accordingly, it will be unsafe and impractical for any active travel.
- The impossibility of active travel to access Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks will result in more car journeys and increased pressure on Hurstpierpoint High Street and also on Hassocks and Burgess Hill stations (which are already struggling with the existing number of car journeys).

Availability of, and distance to social and community facilities

- Again, given that the western edge of the two parcels is over 1km from the access point on Jane Murray Way, it is inevitable that residents of MM60, and particularly those in the western parcel, will travel south down Danworth Lane to access the closest social and community facilities in Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks.
- Even then the closest shops, cafes, restaurants and pubs on Hurstpierpoint High Street and other amenities such as a GP surgery, are 2.5km away.
- Access south down Danworth Lane by active travel will become unsafe and impractical and access by vehicles will become heavily congested for the reasons given in response to the next agenda point.

Effect on the surrounding road network and highway safety for all users, including school children and horse riders, taking into account mitigation measures

- There are 5 potential vehicle routes in and out of MM60:

- Primary access onto Jane Murray Way.
- Secondary access north up Danworth Lane.
- Secondary access south down Danworth Lane.
- North up Malthouse Lane (from the connecting road between the MM60 parcels.)
- South down Malthouse Lane (from the connecting road between the MM60 parcels.)

○ Although it is envisaged that the primary access will be via Jane Murrary Way, residents wishing to head north, west or south to Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks and beyond will use the secondary access on Danworth Lane (from where they will travel either north or south).

○ The Policy Requirements envisage "improvements to Danworth Lane" and assume that all traffic using the secondary access will travel north up Danworth Lane (and not south). This fails to address the following key problems:

- Danworth Lane currently serves 20 homes and is sometimes used by parents taking children to and from Hurstpierpoint College. It is a quiet country Lane that is regularly used by walkers, joggers, cyclists and horse riders.
- It is plainly foreseeable that adding 750 homes to MM60 will have a substantially increased effect on traffic on Danworth Lane (both north and south). Residents will inevitably travel south down Danworth Lane as it is the quickest route to access Hurstpierpoint and key destinations such as Brighton beyond. They will also head north up Danworth Lane to reach the A23/A2300 and to head north towards London. It may well be that in practice the access point on Danworth Lane becomes the primary or at least an equally used access as the access on Jane Murray Way.
- The traffic effects will be worsened by the fact that MM60 and the southern section of Danworth Lane will become a "rat run" as it will become the quickest route from parts of Burgess Hill to Hurstpierpoint. Similarly, it will be used by residents of Hurstpierpoint as the quickest way to get to the supermarket and superstores on Jane Murray Way.
- The traffic will also be significantly worsened by 1,350 homes being built at DPSC1 (who will use MM60 to access Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks).
- Any "improvements" or "mitigation measures" will be substantially limited by the fact that both north and south on Danworth Lane are single track lanes with no pavements or even verges for long sections and with no scope for being widened as there are residential properties that own the land on both sides. Any mitigation would also need to maintain access for large vehicles and tractors that need to access the fields on both sides of the lane. Photos were provided in the comments previously submitted by Danworth Lane Action Group – but if there is any suggestion that improvements or measures could mitigate the impact on Danworth Lane, the Inspector is invited to attend a site visit to see it in person.
- In addition, there is already substantial congestion at school pickup and dropoff times at the point where Danworth Lane joins Chalkers Lane (due to it providing one of only 3 access routes to Hurstpierpoint College). Adding large numbers of additional vehicles will further exacerbate these existing problems at peak times.

- The real world impact of even a relatively modest increase in traffic on Danworth Lane was recently demonstrated when, during the week of 5th October, a nearby road was closed for roadworks. As a result, there was an increase in traffic on the Lane which resulted in:
    - Exceptionally long queues of traffic becoming backed up in both directions as there were no passing points.



    - The problems became so bad that Hurstpierpoint College initially tried requesting that parents use it in one direction only, and when that did not reduce the congestion, ultimately had to bus students from the College to a local pub to be collected by parents from there, so as to reduce the number of vehicles on the Lane. The College's buses then struggled to get down the lane.



    - At certain times drivers simply abandoned cars on the Lane because it was quicker to walk to their destinations than drive. This resulted in additional congestion.
    - Residents had to allow drivers to park on their drives in an effort to clear the congestion.
- There are times each year when Danworth Lane floods and become impassible as it passes over Herrings Stream. Photographs of flooding were provided with the previous Comments submitted by Danworth Lane Action Group. When Danworth Lane floods, Malthouse Lane typically also floods in both directions. At those times the 5 access routes in and out of MM60

would reduce down to just 2. This will simply worsen traffic on roads that will have already exceeded their capacity.

- No assessment of the effect of MM60 (combined with DPSC1) on traffic on Danworth Lane has been carried out. This is a fundamental error given that the Lane will go from serving 20 residents to serving over 2,000, particularly in circumstances where there is no real ability to "improve" or "mitigate" the effects of the inevitable increased in traffic and where there is clear evidence demonstrating that even a relatively modest increase in journeys results in traffic chaos.

- In addition, the inevitable increase in traffic will mean that the Lane will cease to be a safe route for active travel. It is clear from the above photographs that it would be nonsensical to suggest that school children or horse riders could use the Lane with similar levels of increased traffic. This will affect not only those active travellers and recreational users that currently use it, but will also prevent residents of MM60 and DPSC1 from using it for active travel (therefore affecting the sustainability of both sites).

- This is important as:

    - Danworth Lane, along with Malthouse Lane, is the only safe route for active travel from the south eastern parts of Hurstpierpoint to the northern areas. The only other route is up and down Cuckfield Road – which is obviously unsafe for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. The loss of these linking routes will substantially limit the recreational use of those areas.

    - There are multiple rights of way through MM60 and the surrounding fields on both sides of Danworth Lane. These will become meaningless if no active travellers can reach them in order to use them, due to Danworth Lane being unsafe.

    - The loss of active travel will mean an increased number of vehicle journeys and worsen the traffic impact identified above.

    - Quiet country lanes such as Danworth Lane are part of the intrinsic character of Hurstpierpoint. Its loss will be a substantial loss to the character of the village.

- The initial sustainability appraisal of MM60 in 2023 identified that pre-mitigation, the negative points heavily outweighed the positive points (which were largely restricted to the fact that it would result in an increase in housing). Even based on the post-mitigation site assessment it was determined by the Council at that time that the allocation of MM60 was unsound. The revised sustainability appraisal for MM60 carried out in 2026 has revised the scoring, but MM60 is unique compared to the other proposed modification areas in that it includes three factors where there would be a major negative impact and only five areas where it was said to have a positive impact. The combined effect of the sustainability appraisal (as carried out) was accordingly finely balanced. However, for the reasons identified above, it is unclear how in relation to "Climate Change and Transport" and "Economic Regeneration" it was concluded that the site was within a 15 minute walk from local facilities and retail provision. In particular, it is not clear how this conclusion was reached in the absence of any assessment of the effect of MM60 on local roads and whether residents will be able to safely walk to and from the access point on Danworth Lane or even safely walk from one parcel to another (given that the connecting road between the parcels is also a single track lane incapable of being widened).

- For the reasons identified above, it is submitted that the inherent limitations of MM60 in respect of active travel and the ability to access local facilities, mean that the balance of the sustainability appraisal strongly indicates that it does not satisfy the test of soundness.

B. LANDSCAPE, COUNTRYSIDE AND HERITAGE

Effect on the separate identity of settlements taking into account landscaping and planting buffers

- The Mid Sussex District Plan Submission Draft (Regulation 19) includes Policy DPC2: Preventing Coalescence, which recognises that the settlement pattern of Mid Sussex — individual towns and villages, each with a distinct identity, separated by countryside — is a key part of the District's distinctive character, and that a strategic objective of the Plan is to ensure that when travelling between settlements, people should have a sense that they have left one before arriving at the next.
- Coalescence must be considered by considering the cumulative impact of allowing MM60 and MM74 (together with DPSC1). Doing so would reduce the gap of agricultural countryside currently separating Burgess Hill and Hurstpierpoint from around 1.5km to less than 500m, much of which is already occupied by Hurstpierpoint College. The two new allocations would, in combination with the College, form a single continuous block of development extending from the existing edge of Burgess Hill to the main residential areas of Hurstpierpoint, causing the effective merger of the two settlements.
- Importantly, the large open fields with hedges and quiet, rural lanes are intrinsic parts of the Low Weald surrounding Hurstpierpoint. They contribute to its distinct character as a village rich with heritage and separate from Hassocks and Burgess Hill. Losing large parts of that to a development will result in a substantial loss of that unique character.
- Currently there is a clear line marking the built-up area around the southern section of Burgess Hill that is defined by Jane Murray Way. The two parcels of MM60 will extend that into a tongue of developments with no clearly defined boundary. There will be an inevitable loss of a clear sense of leaving one area and entering another, as the development at MM74 will merge along the now busy traffic on Danworth Lane into the western section of MM60 which will then merge along another busy connecting road to the eastern section of MM60 – with no clear sense of leaving Hurstpierpoint or entering Burgess Hill.
- The loss of the gap will also be clearly visible from raised land in Hurstpierpoint and the South Downs as an indistinct 1km wide development.
- Landscaping and planting will not be able to avoid any of the above factors.

Effect on the countryside and access to it, trees, woodland and wildlife

- As noted above, MM60 will inevitably impact on the countryside character of Hurstpierpoint and on access to the countryside.
- Although this can be partly mitigated by the landscaping and planting buffers, these cannot avoid the inevitable loss of a large amount of agricultural land and the loss of a key travel route for active travellers and recreational users.

C. INFRASTRUCTURE, DELIVERY AND CAPACITY

Site capacity and delivery rates

- The comments submitted to the Inspector confirm that a large proportion of MM60 cannot be built on due to a restrictive covenant held by a private landowner (who has confirmed that permission has not and will not be given). MM60 is simply not deliverable without such permission.

Flood risk

- As noted above, Danworth Lane and Malthouse Lane simultaneously flood at times during the year and become impassible. This will further exacerbate the traffic impact of MM60 on the local road network.
- Mitigation measures may reduce the risk of MM60 worsening the problem of flooding due to increasing the rate of runoff water draining into Herrings Stream. However, even if MM60 does not worsen the current flooding problems, the existing problems are already sufficiently serious to mean that MM60 will cause even greater stress on local road networks at times when they occur.

CONCLUSION

For the above reasons, the Group invites the Inspector to conclude that MM60 should not be incorporated into the Plan. If the allocation is nevertheless retained, significant modification would be required, including reconsideration of the reliance upon Danworth Lane as a means of access.

In particular, the allocation of MM60 has not been justified by proportionate evidence demonstrating that the proposal is deliverable, that highway and active travel impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated, that flooding and access constraints can be adequately addressed, or that the erosion of settlement separation can be sufficiently avoided.

MM60, DPSC1 and MM74 must be evaluated cumulatively. When viewed together, those proposals would place huge additional pressure on the already stretched local road network, reduce the perceived separation between settlements and alter the character of the countryside between Burgess Hill and Hurstpierpoint, and of Hurstpierpoint itself.

MM60 appears to have been assessed as though its effects can be considered largely through connections into Burgess Hill. In practice, a substantial proportion of traffic would inevitably travel south and west towards Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks. The evidence base does not properly assess the consequences of that pattern of movement on Danworth Lane, Malthouse Lane, Chalkers Lane and adjoining rural roads.

No detailed assessment has been undertaken of the cumulative effect of MM60 together with DPSC1 upon local roads, rights of way and patterns of movement. The consequence is that each proposal is assessed largely in isolation even though residents would use the same network of rural lanes and junctions.

The transport evidence also proceeds on the assumption that mitigation can be secured on Danworth Lane despite the fact that the physical characteristics of the lane, including its width, absence of

pavements, absence of verges, residential frontages and existing use by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and school traffic, place inherent limits on what mitigation can realistically be achieved.

The reduction in the countryside gap between Burgess Hill and Hurstpierpoint should be considered in light of planning policies intended to preserve the separate identity of settlements. The issue is not confined to visual landscaping. It includes the experience of travelling between settlements and whether a clear sense of leaving one settlement before entering another is retained.

Finally, although flood mitigation may reduce additional runoff, the existing flooding of Danworth Lane and Malthouse Lane remains a material constraint. The effect of flooding upon access, resilience and network capacity during periods when routes become impassable has not been fully addressed.

Attendance

It is proposed that the following members of Danworth Lane Action Group will attend the hearing, and one will make oral submissions on behalf of the Group in addition to the points raised above:

Rob Gillespie
Ebonee Gregory
Susannah Jenner

16th October 2026