MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

MS-07b: Sites Added by the draft Main Modifications – Hassocks (MM71)

Hearing Statement
October 2026

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Sites Added by the draft Main Modifications – Hassocks

MM71: Land West of Ockley Lane, Hassocks

1. The allocation policy has been introduced at Main Modifications stage as MM71. The proposed allocation is for 250 dwellings to the north of Hassocks (Category 2 settlement) adjacent to the defined built-up area and settlement boundary.

2. Through the site selection process, the site was assessed as a sustainable extension to Hassocks, south of Ockley Park development which is currently being built out and comprises on-site infrastructure provision such as a 2FE primary school and community building. The site is relatively unconstrained; however, the site is considered to have an important role in retaining a gap between the settlements of Hassocks and Burgess Hill. The site was originally promoted for 400 dwellings; however, the yield has been amended to 250 to ensure a large area of the site is retained for open space to ensure the retention of this gap between the settlements.

a. Movement

Access

3. Criterion 1 of MM71 requires the development to provide a suitable access to the site from Ockley Lane. The site promoter has provided a concept masterplan which shows vehicular access to the east of the site on Ockley Lane, south of Ockley House.

4. It is noted that West Sussex County Council Highways has not identified an objection or subsequent modification in relation to the access arrangements for this proposed allocation.

Effect on the road network

5. The Council considers that the policy requirements set out for MM71 would have a positive effect on the road network. The policy includes specific requirements relating to the provision of suitable access arrangements and enhanced pedestrian and cycle connectivity to existing routes and paths. These measures are intended to improve accessibility to local services and facilities by sustainable modes of transport and reduce reliance on the private car.

6. The Council has undertaken strategic transport modelling through the Mid Sussex Transport Model: Scenario 7 Results [T18a], in liaison with West Sussex County Council (local highway authority) and National Highways (strategic highway authority), to assess the impacts arising from the inclusion of the additional 35 sites. Although the assessment concludes that a number of junctions are considered "severe" against the relevant tests set out in the NPPF, there are sufficient policy requirements and mitigation measures identified within the District Plan and Infrastructure Delivery Plan to ensure that any effects on the road network can be mitigated. As such, the Council is satisfied that the evidence demonstrates the proposed allocations can be

accommodated within the transport network. The results of the strategic transport modelling have been agreed by both West Sussex County Council and National Highways as set out in MSTP5 and the recent Statements of Common Ground.

7. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (October 2026) [IV10] sets out the infrastructure requirements for each site which includes either on-site, off-site or financial contributions towards mitigation measures towards new or improved provision on the road network. As a result, the allocation is anticipated to have a positive effect on the road network by helping to mitigate impacts on the local highway network and encourage a modal shift towards more sustainable forms of travel.

The pedestrian and cycling proposals and how they would be provided

8. The site promoter has provided a concept masterplan which shows pedestrian and cycle links to be provided on-site within the site owner's control, integrating with development (Ockley Park) to the south of the site and connecting to the existing pedestrian and cycle path alongside the railway line to the west of the site. This accords with Criterion 2 and 4 of Policy MM71 for the site. To clarify this position, the site promoter as part of their response to the Main Modifications consultation have suggested the following amendment to Criterion 2 and 4:

> "2. Provide **pedestrian and cycle** connectivity **to the boundary of the site to facilitate connections** to **the** existing pedestrian and cycle path alongside the railway line."
>
> "4. **Promote integration of** the development with Ockley Park to the south by providing pedestrian connectivity **to the boundary of the site**."

9. The Council would support this modification to Criterion 2 and 4 of Policy MM71, as it would ensure that the policy includes an appropriate mechanism to provide greater certainty that the provision of pedestrian and cycle connectivity with Ockley Park is fully explored.

10. Criterion 3 of Policy MM71 also sets out improved pedestrian and cycling connectivity to Hassocks/Keymer to the south and nearby bus stops by providing a footway and cycle path on Ockley Lane. These are measures that will be discussed with the Highways Authority.

11. It is noted that West Sussex County Council Highways has not raised an objection or subsequent modification in relation to the pedestrian and cycling proposals for this proposed allocation. WSCC through their representation has recommended additional criterion to be added to MM71 to support the provision of sustainable transport measures via proportionate contributions to benefit users of the A273/B2114 Stonepound Crossroads along local journeys, as advised by the Transport Evidence Base. The Council consider that appropriate mechanisms to secure additional contributions towards infrastructure and sustainable transport measures can be secured through the Development Management Process, as set out in Policy DPT3: Active Travel, Policy DPI1: Infrastructure Provision and DP12: Planning Obligations. The Council is satisfied that, at Plan making stage, there are no concerns raised by the Highways Authority that would prevent the allocation of the site regarding traffic generation and cumulative impact however, more detail will be fully assessed at planning application stage through future

Transport Assessments that are required by policy to accompany any subsequent planning application.

Availability and frequency of bus services

12. The site benefits from access to existing public transport, with bus stops located to the north on Ockley Hill and to the south on Ockley Lane. These stops are served by the 33 and 33A bus services. On weekdays, services operate hourly in both directions, with the first service towards Cuckfield, Haywards Heath and Burgess Hill departing before 07:00 and the final return service arriving at approximately 18:30. Services towards Hurstpierpoint commence at approximately 08:30, with the final return service at around 18:00. On Saturdays, services operate every two hours in both directions, with the first service towards Haywards Heath and Burgess Hill at approximately 08:00 and the final return service at around 17:30. Services towards Hurstpierpoint commence at approximately 09:30, with the final return service at around 16:00.

13. Criterion 3 of Policy MM71 sets out improvements to be made to nearby bus stops by providing a footway and cycle path on Ockley Lane. This requirement is intended to enhance access between the site and the existing bus stops, encouraging sustainable travel choices and ensuring that future residents are able to conveniently access the bus services available. The detailed design and delivery of these improvements would be considered through the planning application process in consultation with West Sussex County Council as the Highway Authority.

14. It is noted that West Sussex County Council has recommended additional criterion to be added to MM71 to support the provision of bus service improvements for this site. Their suggested modification is as follows:

> "Provide bus service improvements to include increased frequencies of existing services and consideration of re-routing to serve the site."

15. In line with other site policies, the Council would support the inclusion of this additional criterion within MM71, as it would help ensure that the availability and frequency of bus services are sufficient to meet the travel demands arising from the development and support the use of sustainable modes of transport. However, the Council considers that further amendments are necessary to ensure that the policy remains sufficiently flexible and deliverable. In particular, any improvements may need to be delivered through a combination of measures and could be better supported by proportionate contributions from a number of developments rather than being solely attributable to a single site. The modified criterion would therefore read as follows:

> "**17. Where necessary and appropriate to do so, provide bus service improvements to include increased frequencies and consideration of re-routing or extending services to serve the site, and / or make a proportionate contribution towards sustainable transport measures including bus service provision.**"

16. The amendments would provide an appropriate mechanism for ensuring enhancements to bus service provision are required as part of the development, thereby assisting in reducing reliance on the private car and promoting accessibility by public transport.

b. Landscape and countryside

Effect on the separate identity of settlements

17. Criterion 15 of Policy MM71 requires the three northern fields within the site to be retained in their current agricultural use, or provided as public open space, or nature conservation land to safeguard from future development in order to prevent coalescence with Burgess Hill. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that a substantial area of undeveloped land is retained at the northern end of the site, thereby securing the gap in the built development between the northern boundary of Hassocks and the southern edge of Burgess Hill. By safeguarding these fields from future built development, the policy provides a long-term mechanism to preserve the physical and visual separation between the settlements.

18. The Council notes that this approach is reflected in the site promoter's submitted concept masterplan. The masterplan proposes a 25m wide landscape buffer along the northern boundary of the site, together with areas of open space. This creates a clear and defensible edge to the development and reinforces the role of the safeguarded northern fields in maintaining openness and preventing settlement coalescence. In addition, the site is well enclosed on its eastern boundary and therefore the sense of leaving one settlement and arriving at another on Keymer Road/ Ockley Lane is maintained.

19. The masterplan also demonstrates that residential development would be focused on the southern part of the allocation, immediately adjacent to the approved built form associated with the Ockley Park development (DM/18/4979 and DM/21/2841). The proposed development would therefore relate closely to the existing settlement edge of Hassocks rather than extending northwards towards Burgess Hill.

20. In addition, to provide further clarity to Criterion 15 of Policy MM71, the site promoter proposes the suggested amendments:

> "15. Retain the three northern fields, as **identified** on the policies map, **in** agricultural use, public open space or as nature conservation. These fields **should** be safeguarded from future development **in order to maintain separation** and prevent coalescence with Burgess Hill."

21. The Council would support the inclusion of this additional criterion within MM71, as it would help ensure that separation is maintained with Burgess Hill and prevent coalescence of the settlements of Hassocks and Burgess Hill.

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

22. The effect of the allocation on the countryside and access to it, together with trees, woodland and wildlife, is addressed through a number of site-specific policy requirements incorporated within MM71. The policy requires several measures to be put in place as part of development proposals including the provision of appropriate buffers to the priority habitat located along the western and eastern site boundaries, together with a buffer to the adjacent ancient woodland. The policy also requires the enhancement of woodland connectivity, the creation of new woodland, the incorporation of a wildlife area/nature reserve within the north-western part of the site, and the creation and management of permanent vegetated buffer strip along the watercourse in the north-west of the site. These measures are intended to protect existing ecological assets, strengthen habitat networks and secure biodiversity enhancements as part of any future development proposal.

23. The Council agrees that the current wording to criterion 7 and 8 could be interpreted as requiring enhancements to ancient woodland and priority habitats beyond the site boundary however, given the proximity to ancient woodland and priority habitats and for consistency with other sites that have such designations adjacent to them, the Council proposes a minor modification to the criterion for each policy could be amended as follows:

"7. Provide an appropriate buffer for the priority habitat (deciduous woodland) on the western side boundary along the railway line and to the east of the site. ~~and ensure enhancements to the priority habitat.~~"

"8. Provide an appropriate buffer to the adjacent ancient woodland (Ockley Wood). ~~and ensure enhancements to the ancient woodland.~~"

24. In addition, the site promoter has submitted a concept masterplan demonstrating how these requirements could be delivered. The masterplan indicates a 25m wide landscape buffer along the northern boundary of the site, providing separation from the surrounding countryside whilst also creating opportunities for habitat enhancement and informal recreation. The concept masterplan also shows the provision of new woodland planting throughout the site, contributing to enhanced woodland connectivity and reinforcing the landscape-led design of the development.

25. In terms of access to the countryside, the concept masterplan proposes a network of informal footpaths within the nature reserve area, throughout the wider site and connection to the wider PROW network. This would provide opportunities for residents to access and experience natural green spaces, whilst ensuring that ecological enhancements are integrated into the design and layout of the development. The proposed nature reserve, woodland creation and habitat buffers would not only seek to mitigate the effects of development on existing environmental assets but would also seek to enhance biodiversity value and connectivity across the site.

26. Accordingly, the Council considers that the policy requirements contained within MM71, as well as other policies within the District Plan and national planning policy and legislation, contains an appropriate framework to ensure that the effects on the countryside, trees, woodland and

wildlife are suitably addressed and that opportunities for ecological enhancement and access to natural green space are secured through future development proposals.

c. Infrastructure

Social and community facilities

27. The site is located immediately adjacent to the built-up area boundary of Hassocks, a Category 2 settlement that benefits from a good range of services and facilities, including employment opportunities and access to public transport. The site also lies within close proximity to the built-up area boundary of Burgess Hill, a Category 1 settlement with a comprehensive range of employment, retail, health, education and leisure services and facilities within easy pedestrian and cycle access.

28. The site is bounded by the Ockley Park development to the south (DM/18/4979 and DM/21/2841). Ockley Park comprises housing as well as permission for a 2FE primary school and a community building. The concept masterplan submitted by the site promoter illustrates sports pitches and a children's play area are proposed as part of the development and shows how it could link into the facilities provided on Ockley Park to the south. The current policy wording does not explicitly include a requirement for outdoor sports provision and play areas within the policy criteria. However, these elements are identified within the list of on-site infrastructure expected to be delivered as part of the development. Following discussions with the site promoter, it has been agreed that a minor modification should be made to the policy through the addition of a new criterion to provide greater clarity and ensure consistency between the policy requirements and the on-site infrastructure schedule. The proposed additional criterion is as follows:

> "**18. Provision of on-site outdoor sports pitches and a designated/equipped play area, subject to there being a demonstrable and quantifiable need for such facilities**."

29. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (October 2026) [IV10] also sets out the infrastructure requirements for each site which includes either on-site, off-site or financial contributions towards new or improved provision of social and community facilities.

Utilities and any potential impediment to delivery

30. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (October 2026) [IV10] identifies sewerage network upgrades will be required on-site to ensure there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the proposed development. Limited capacity is not a constraint to development provided that planning policy and subsequent conditions ensure that occupation of this development is phased to align with the delivery of wastewater infrastructure. It is expected and encouraged that the applicant of the site engage with Southern Water as the Statutory Wastewater Undertaker for Mid Sussex as part of any future planning application to ensure the appropriate network reinforcement is in place.