Local Plan Hearing Statement

In Respect of Examination of Main Modification 72, 73, 74, 75 & 76 to Draft Mid Sussex District Plan 2021 - 2039

Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Parish Council

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This Hearing Statement comprises Representations for and on behalf of Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Parish Council (the 'Parish Council'), to the Examination Hearing in respect of the Main Modifications to the Draft Mid Sussex District Plan 2021 - 2039 (the 'Draft Plan').

1.2. These Representations have been prepared following the submission of Representations by the Parish Council in response to the emerging Draft Plan, most recently, to the Consultation on the draft Main Modifications in September 2026.

1.3. These Representations relate to 'Matter 7 Continued: Sites Added by the Draft Main Modifications' and in particular, Site MM72: Land East of College Lane; Site MM73: Land South of Hurst Wickham Barn, College Lane; Site MM74: Land North of Willow Way and Talbot Mead; Site MM75: Land South of Hurst Wickham Barn; and Site MM76: Land North East of Hurstpierpoint (the 'sites'), as set out by the Inspector in the Week 4: Hearings Agenda, due to take place on Thursday 05th November 2026. They follow the format of the key matters to be discussed, as identified by the Inspector in the Agenda, and amplified in the associated 'Guidance Note from the Inspector'.

1.4. The Parish Council seek to supplement these Written Representations by attending and participating in the Hearings in relation to these Sites.

2. MM72 - MM76 (INCLUSIVE): LAND IN AND AROUND HURSTPIERPOINT

2.1. Representations in respect of Site MM72 - MM76 (inclusive) are presented under the following Matters to be discussed, as identified by the Inspector in the Hearing Agenda:

- Movement;
- Village Character, Heritage and the Countryside;
- Infrastructure.

2.2. Each of these are addressed in turn below.

Movement

2.3. The Parish Council are concerned at the impact of traffic from development of the sites, increasing traffic in and around Hurstpierpoint centre.

2.4. As identified by the Inspector in his earlier Post Hearing Letter[1], in relation to other site allocations in the Draft Plan, there are concerns at the effect of development allocated in the Draft Plan on Hurstpierpoint High Street. This concern goes beyond matters of junction capacity.

[1] IDJB-12: Inspector's Post Hearing Letter

2.5. This part of the local highway network is already the subject of significant traffic volumes. Approximately 6,700 vehicles a day travel through Hurstpierpoint High Street[2]. This includes significant numbers of HGV's despite the presence of a weight restriction.

2.6. Endeavours to ease long-standing congestion within Hurstpierpoint High Street has been the subject of extensive appraisal.

2.7. The key constraint of the High Street, is that it is of historic form with numerous listed buildings, and contains a number of 'pinch-points' where two-way flow of traffic is not practically possible. These constraints are a result of road width, geometry and buildings, not the layout of parking and unauthorised parked cars. The pinch points require vehicles to await clearance of vehicles travelling in the opposite direction to be able to pass. The High Street sets out priority signage, to control flows and minimise congestion within the High Street.

2.8. All practical measures to mitigate congestion and ease traffic flow have been investigated and implemented, as far as is practically possible, within the limitations of the extent of the public highway.

2.9. It is therefore submitted that these site allocations, together with others in the wider area would be likely to result in increased congestion of the High Street, and surrounding roads, including, but not limited to College Lane and Cuckfield Road.

2.10. Increased congestion, would adversely impact the existing resident community, and harm the vitality and viability of Hurstpierpoint High Street; an important local centre serving the resident community.

2.11. Separate to this, there are concerns in respect of Site MM74: Land North of Willow Way and Talbot Mead, Cuckfield Road. Policy MM74(5) requires a new footway along Cuckfield Road, Danworth Lane and Chalkers Lane, to facilitate pedestrian access to the services of Hurstpierpoint and local bus stops.

2.12. However, the width of the public highway, together with boundary hedges and trees may mean it is not possible to provide suitable pedestrian connections south of the site along either Cuckfield Road or Danworth Lane/Chalkers Lane.

2.13. The indicative scheme contained within the scheme proponents Vision Document[3] does not evidence a pedestrian connection from the site to footways along either roadway. On Cuckfield Road, the nearest existing footway is located south of Willow Way, and is not connected to the site allocation. On Danworth Lane/Chalker's Lane the nearest footway is located south of Mildred Durrant Way (or alternatively an unlit section of off-highway public right of way on the east side of Chalkers Lane, north-east of Hurstbeech Lane). Neither are connected to the site allocation.

2.14. It is noted that the scheme proponents Vision Document states that the scheme includes a 'need to accommodate new footway within the site as far south as possible before meeting Cuckfield Road'[4]. There is no commitment to connect to existing footways.

[2] Traffic and Transport Assessment - Obtrada Ltd - attached at Appendix 1 of the Parish Council's Main Modifications Representations - September 2026
[3] ECE Architecture - dated November 2025
[4] Annotation attached to sketch as Section 4.05 of Vision Document - November 2025

2.15. In the absence of a safe, suitable, all-weather pedestrian access to connect the site along public highways to the wider village, occupiers of the site would be likely to be heavily reliant on the private car to access services and facilities in Hurstpierpoint. This is inherently unsustainable and likely to further exacerbate congestion in and around Hurstpierpoint High Street and College Lane through the Hurst Wickham Conservation Area.

2.16. There are also concerns in respect of Site MM72: Land East of College Lane; Site MM73: Land south of Hurst Wickham Barn; and Site MM75: Land south of Hurst Wickham Barn.

2.17. At present the scheme proponent documents submitted in support of the sites, and the policy allocations would result in each site being separately served by a vehicular access on to College Lane[5]. This would represent poor spatial planning and poorly connected/related development.

2.18. It is submitted that if the 3 sites were to be allocated, they should be served by a single access point, with development of the land parcels co-ordinated in order to deliver the most suitable form of residential development and place-making.

2.19. This view is further reinforced by the importance of the College Lane frontage in contributing to the avoidance of coalescence, and the effect on the setting of the Hurst Wickham Conservation Area and Grade II Wickham Farmhouse. The urbanising effect of multiple access points, would have a harmful effect on the setting of these heritage assets.

Village Character, Heritage and the Countryside

2.20. Hurstpierpoint is located at the northern edge of the South Downs National Park. It is village that is in close proximity to other settlements, in particular Hassocks to the east, Burgess Hill to the north-east and Albourne to the west. This has been reflected in the allocation of 'gaps' in the Development Plan to seek to ensure the settlement retains its individual identity and does not coalesce with neighbouring built up areas.

2.21. Site MM72 was previously the subject of a planning application for residential development of 81No. dwellings and change of use of 4.3 hectares of land to informal open space with landscape planting (LPA reference 13/01250/FUL).

2.22. The indicative masterplan contained in the scheme proponents Vision Document indicates a similar site layout to this previous proposal.

2.23. The application was called in for decision by the Secretary of State, and determined at a time when the District Council were unable to demonstrate a five year housing land supply. The Secretary of State resolved to refuse planning permission in accordance with the Inspector's recommendation.

2.24. In considering the planning balance, the Inspector set out in Paragraph 13.56 of their recommendation letter that:

> *"All in all, I am of the opinion that, whilst the site provides a valuable opportunity to contribute to the district's housing requirements, the scheme is unacceptable in terms of its impact on the local gap. Given that the development proposed would take place within what is already a particularly narrow part of*

[5] Illustrative Masterplan in Vision Document - October 2025 in respect of MM72; Drawing QD876 in respect of MM73; and Drawing Y3367_SK01 in respect of MM75

the gap, that harm is serious enough to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the scheme's benefits and brings it in conflict with the Development Plan and the framework taken as a whole."

2.25. The sites are located within the 'Local Gap' designated in the 'made' Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan. The aim of this designation is to prevent development that would individually or cumulatively result in coalescence and loss of separate identity of existing settlements.

2.26. It is submitted that the 3 proposed allocations on land east of College Lane (MM72, MM73 and MM75) would erode the local gap between Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks. This would contribute to coalescence and cause the loss of settlement identity.

2.27. The 3 site allocations lie immediately to the south of the designated Hurst Wickham Conservation Area.

2.28. Having regard to the heritage significance of the Conservation Area and the valuable contribution that land to the East of College Lane and south of the Conservation Area plays in its contribution to the setting of this designated heritage asset, it is considered that the residential development envisaged of 3 allocations would undermine its rural setting and erode the separate character of the Hurst Wickham Conservation Area from the wider parts of Hurstpierpoint.

2.29. It is noted that the Heritage Impact Assessment submitted by the scheme proponents in support of Site MM73, contends that development of that site is acceptable provided development does not project to the south. It notes that *"to protect the wider setting of the village no further development is considered appropriate within the open fields to the south which better capture the rural setting of Hurst Wickham and allows it to be appreciated as a settlement in its own right"*.[6]

2.30. The proposed access points for the development allocation of MM72 and MM75 are proposed to be positioned close to each other, east of the Grade II listed Wickham Farmhouse.

2.31. That property was historically within a rural setting, but is now surrounded on 3 sides (north, south and west) by residential development. The only connection with its historically rural, undeveloped setting is the land east of College Lane (i.e. Sites MM72 and MM75).

2.32. It is submitted that these sites positively contribute to the significance of this heritage asset. It represents the last connection of undeveloped agricultural land to the Farmhouse, that it historically relates to.

2.33. The inevitable urbanisation that would result from development, including the accesses into MM72 and MM75 would result in the permanent loss of the final rural connection to the listed farmhouse. This would have a detrimental effect on the significance of the heritage asset.

2.34. The eastern land parcel of Site MM74 is located within the 'Local Gap' designated in the 'made' Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan between the settlements of Hurstpierpoint and Burgess Hill.

2.35. The land allocated through MM74 is wholly rural in character. It is visually separated from the existing built-up edge of Hurstpierpoint by a robust tree and woodland edge that follows the route of a watercourse which travels broadly east–west.

[6] Executive Summary of Heritage Impact Assessment - December 2024 - Blue Willow Heritage

2.36. The development of the site would represent a significant urbanising incursion of built form beyond the existing well-defined northern edge of built form. The development would be visually divorced from the wider settlement and appear as an isolated form of development in an otherwise rural setting.

2.37. The development of the site, together with other land allocated for residential development within the area, in particular MM60: Land East and West of Malthouse Lane, would significantly erode the existing gap between the settlements of Hurstpierpoint and Burgess Hill.

2.38. At present, this gap is some 1.5km when measured from Jane Murray Way in a southwesterly direction to the rear garden of properties in Hurstbeech Close (north of Chalkers Lane).

2.39. However, this includes the built estate of Hurstpierpoint College. It covers land that is either side of Chalker's Lane and the demise extends as far north as the Herrings Stream. This is not considered to contribute to the openness of the gap.

2.40. The development of Site MM60 would effectively remove the 'gap' between the edge of Burgess Hill and Hurstpierpoint College.

2.41. On this basis, the residual 'gap' would be that between the south-western edge of Hurstpierpoint College and the properties in Hurstbeech Close. This is some 330m.

2.42. The proposed development of Site MM60 would result in the effective coalescence of Burgess Hill with Hurstpierpoint.

2.43. The allocation of Site MM74 would further consolidate built form in this area, eroding the sense of separation between Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common.

2.44. This concern is compounded by the proposed allocation of land for development at Site MM76. This lies to the south of Hurstpierpoint College and is wholly located within the 'Local Gap' designated in the 'made' Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan.

2.45. Development of this site would reduce the gap from the College to the northern edge of Hurstpierpoint to some 300m.

2.46. It is submitted that the erosion of the rural undeveloped setting of Hurstpierpoint College, would have a harmful effect on the significance of the heritage asset.

2.47. The proposed development of Site MM76 would also significantly enclose the presently open character of Hurst Meadows, which is already bound by development to the east, south, and west. It would visually divorce this area from countryside to the north.

2.48. It is noted that the Masterplan Concept for Site MM76 set out by the scheme proponents in their Vision Document[7] envisages the provision of significant additional 'strategic planting' in an east to west alignment toward the northern periphery of the site, in order to 'reduce visual impact' and 'contain development'

[7] Vision Document - November 2022 - Rydon Homes

2.49. It is submitted that this acknowledges both the open nature of the northern site edge, and the potential impact of the development on the surrounding rural landscape and the setting of the Hurstpierpoint College.

2.50. Given the cumulative effect of development allocations MM60, MM74 and MM76, it is submitted that the site allocations should include the associated identification of a surrounding rural hinterland to be retained as an undeveloped landscape buffer.

2.51. It is submitted that residual areas of undeveloped 'local gap' should be expressly included within the policy allocations within the Local Plan, so that they are aligned to the development and endure well beyond the Plan period.

Infrastructure

2.52. Concerns are raised at the impact of development of the sites on water supply and waste water infrastructure.

2.53. The lived experience of local residents of the parish is that there are existing problems and failures of the water supply and waste water treatment systems in the area. The former includes low pressure and supply outages, whilst the latter includes an inability of the Waste Water Treatment Works at Goddards Green to manage existing waste water levels. There are frequent occurrences of queues of waste tankers at Goddards Green being used to remove waste water from the local system and transport out of the area for processing elsewhere.

2.54. The Parish Council consider that any further development within the area should be aligned to the delivery of additional water supply and waste water infrastructure capacity, prior to the construction/ occupation of additional dwellings. It is considered that this requirement should be embedded in the policy allocation of the sites.

3. SUMMARY

3.1. It is considered that Sites MM72, MM73, MM74, MM75 and MM76, comprising land to north, north-east and eastern edge of Hurstpierpoint, should not be allocated for residential development.

3.2. The sites are part of the existing designated Local Gap that separates Hurstpierpont from the adjoining settlements of Burgess Hill and Hassocks. They are rural in character and provide an important function in maintaining individual settlement identity and preventing coalescence.

3.3. In addition to this, Sites MM72, MM73 and MM75 make an important contribution to the setting of both the Hurst Wickham Conservation Area and the Grade II Listed Wickham Farmhouse. Development of the land parcels would detrimentally impact the significance of these heritage assets. It is considered that any allocation of these 3 land parcels should include a requirement for these to be served by a single access point onto College Lane.

3.4. Similarly concerns are raised at the cumulative impact of proposed development on the setting of the heritage asset of Hurstpierpoint College, from MM74, MM76 and MM60 (the latter of which is addressed separately).

It is submitted that any confirmation of land allocations in this area should include designation of surrounding land as a local gap.

3.5. There are concerns that Site MM74 may not be deliverable with suitable all weather footways that connect the site to either Cuckfield Road and/ or Danworth Lane/Chalkers Lane. In the absence of these, future occupiers would be heavily reliant on access by private car.

3.6. More generally, concerns are raised that the quantum of development envisaged in and around Hurstpierpoint would be likely to result in increased congestion of the High Street, and surrounding roads, including, but not limited to College Lane and Cuckfield Road.

3.7. Increased congestion, would adversely impact the existing resident community, and harm the vitality and viability of Hurstpierpoint High Street; an important local centre serving the resident community.

3.8. Concerns are raised at the impact of development on water supply and waste water infrastructure. The lived experience of local residents is of existing outages of water supply and sewage systems. Any development should be aligned to the timely delivery of improvements to deliver requisite capacity for both the existing and future resident population.