

Statement in respect of Inspector's MIQ 4.2

1. We are residents of Ardingly and therefore have particular interest in Policy SA25 Land West of Selsfield Road (70 proposed dwellings).
2. As the Inspector is aware, this land lies within an AONB. Development of any sort and extent is, therefore, in principle, a matter that should be approached with considerable caution given that "Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty" in an area which has "the highest status of protection in relation to these issues".
3. Ardingly is a small village. Paragraph 172 of the National Framework Policy sets out clearly that "Planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances."
4. Two questions arise from this:
  - a. What is a major development in this context?;
  - b. Are there any exceptional circumstances?
5. Footnote 55 requires the Decision Maker to take into account scale and setting in his assessment as to whether a development is major. As to the former (scale), the Inspector will be aware that the proposed 70 house development increases the built up area of the village by 18% and the number of actual dwellings by 15%. By any standard, this must be "major". As to the latter, it is difficult to conceive of any "exceptional circumstances". The bulk of proposed development (and, indeed, employment) in mid-Sussex falls in the corridor between Hassocks and Haywards Heath (i.e. south of Haywards Heath) rather than in the Weald area north of the town. There is no obvious need to provide additional housing currently in Ardingly which, in any event, has recently had a new housing estate built north of Standgrove Place.
6. In addition, the proposed location lies outside the current built up area of the village and outside that proposed by the Village Plan.
7. If housing is to be permitted on this site, the scale should be smaller than the currently proposed 70 dwellings<sup>1</sup>. The Inspector may wish to visit the site north of Standgrove Place (approximately 30 houses) for a development that might be more in keeping with paragraph 172 noted above.
8. We are not in a position to comment specifically on other proposed sites, but it is a matter of considerable concern that the DPD proposes development in several AONB locations. The Inspector may well be aware of recent research by CPRE which has highlighted the extent of development within AONBs since 2017 and, in particular, within the High Weald AONB. Further proposals for development must raise a question as to the overall "soundness" of the Plan.

Rowan and Julia Planterose

1 May 2021

<sup>1</sup> The Inspector may wish to note that, in its current consultation with the Village, the promoter/developer continues to put forward a 100 house scheme, already rejected by MSDC.