

Site	Relevant small-scale sites in the AONB including Site 68: Farm buildings, Jeffreys Farm, Horsted Keynes
MIQ concerned	Matter 4 - Are the Plan's provisions for the protection and enhancement of its environmental, landscape, biodiversity and heritage assets justified and in accordance with national policy? 4.2 Given the importance of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) as a national policy constraint with the highest status of protection in the English town and country planning system in relation to landscape and scenic beauty, what is the justification for allocating the proposed number of dwellings in the High Weald AONB? In relation to paragraph 172 of the Framework and the support in policy DP16 for appropriate 'small scale' proposals in the AONB , what should be the definition of 'major development' in the context of Mid Sussex?
Part of document deemed to be unsound	SSP3 Site Selection Process: Housing including Appendix B. In summary: Stage 3 of the site selection process and the resultant sustainability assessments and reasonable alternative comparisons leading to unjustified site allocations in Horsted Keynes.
Soundness criteria	Fails on: positively prepared and justified , and consistent with national policy (positively prepared / justified / effective / consistent with national policy)
New Information available	New information has become available following Reg 19 consultation in Dec 2020, notably the submission of a planning application (DM/20/4692) for SA29 (application validated Jan 2021). Many responses to the application have been received by MSDC, and a <u> Holding Objection </u> was submitted by Horsted Keynes Parish Council (HKPC) (Appendix 1). In addition, following the Reg 14 consultation of the Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan HKNP (Nov / Dec 2020), Horsted Keynes Parish Council has <u> withdrawn support </u> for the MSDC Site Allocations DPD (minutes of Council meeting (30/3/21) – Appendix 2). This is following comments made by a large proportion of the respondents regarding site SA29 (Appendix 3 - responses to HKNP Reg 14 consultation), and notably here, the over development of the site leading to threats to the protection of the environment and biodiversity. Comments also referred to the omission of a previously developed site that was capable of providing a highly sustainable small-scale development, site 68: Farm buildings, Jeffreys Farm, Horsted Keynes.
Reasons for failure	Horsted Keynes lies wholly within the High Weald AONB. Two sites have been allocated in the village as part of the site allocations DPD. The allocation of the two green field sites (SA28, and SA29) of medieval origin, for 25 and 30 houses respectively is <u> not justified </u> and <u> represents major development </u> for a village of this size in the AONB. The sites are not considered to meet national planning policy (NPPF Paragraph 172), or the district plan policy DP16. The density and scale proposed for the sites is seen to be over development of their edge of village location, and in no way do their allocations <u> enhance the environmental, landscape, biodiversity and heritage assets of the AONB.</u> As a resident of Horsted Keynes, I am <u> supportive </u> of appropriate development within the AONB. The AONB is not an environmental 'Disneyland', but it is the homes and livelihoods of many people who have lived in the villages and countryside long before the AONB came into existence. These people, their families before, and relatives going forward, have and will maintain the character of the AONB for future generations. Their children want to stay in the village but are unable to without new housing stock coming on to the market, as small houses are now over extended, and the smaller starter homes have become scarce. Horsted Keynes urgently needs to resupply its stock of affordable homes for local people, but the site allocations process has failed Horsted Keynes by allocating SA28 and SA29, and ignoring more appropriate and highly sustainable small-scale sites that were prematurely screened out of the process. This statement should be read in conjunction with my other representations made to the hearing, most notably: MIQ 1.1(ii) – regarding a lack of due process being followed for the site selection process for Horsted Keynes; MIQ 2.2 – regarding the failure of the use of realistic alternatives to

inform the SA in Horsted Keynes; and representations as part of MIQ 3.3 regarding allocated site SA29.

Horsted Keynes is in a unique position as it has been able to critique in detail the information connected to a premature planning application DM/20/4692 on a site that is included in the draft allocations in the village – SA29 at St Stephens Field. The information provided by the site promoter for the site allocations DPD was minimal (SA29.1 to SA29.6) and has been the subject of challenge as it does little to represent the on the ground reality of access and biodiversity. With this new information from the planning application (details available on the planning portal) it is clear that the allocation of the site goes against Paragraph 172 of the NPPF requiring '*Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues*'.

The site SA29 as proposed is clearly overdeveloped, and evidence of this has been presented to the hearings in section MIQ 3.3. To summarise the findings by grace of the planning application DM/20/4692:

- The density of 30 houses on 1.13ha is high for a green field site in an edge of village location in the AONB, and will create a new 'hard' edge to the village pushed into the countryside, rather than blending into it by virtue of reducing the housing density on the village periphery.
- The scale of the development does not allow for meaningful onsite mitigation to enhance the biodiversity to replace the loss of a green field,
- The site promoters have not adequately assessed or addressed the loss of habitat to the existing biodiversity, again due to the condensed layout on the site given the density of housing proposed.
- The scale of the development encroaches on the existing tree lines and hedgerows around the perimeter of the site.
- There is a significant lack of space on site for a sustainable SUDS.
- Of highest concern is the impact on a distinct tree belt that runs parallel to the only available access, of which the access road will cross a substantial portion of their root protection zone. These trees will also have a large quantity of their lower limbs cut where they overhang the proposed access, in order to allow the movement of vehicles.

The application gives little encouragement that a well thought out plan has been made to protect and enhance the environmental, landscape and biodiversity of the site. The site promoter seems to be working to a density that is in the draft allocation instead.

The density and scale proposed for SA29 is seen to be over development of their edge of village location, and in no way does the allocation enhance the environmental, landscape, biodiversity and heritage assets of the AONB. As per NPPF Paragraph 172 '*The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited*', and as such more consideration should be given to the '*detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated*'.

To inform the selection process for the site selection DPD the AONB have given opinion of the relative impact of development of the SHLAA sites that had been put forward in the Stage 3 of the SSP3 in Horsted Keynes. Details of these assessments can be found in the Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan Oct 2018 (Appendix 4). Prior to this the overarching advice that the AONB gave to the Horsted Keynes Parish Council on their site allocations for the draft Neighbourhood Plan (2016) was '*In terms of how this information is used in site assessments, our advice is that **fields that are medieval or earlier (i.e. pre-1500AD) should be avoided when considering sites for development because these are the fields that best reflect the national significance of the AONB landscape.***' (Appendix 5). The comments were accompanied by a map outlining the age of the fields around Horsted Keynes (Appendix 6).

Very few of the fields adjoining the built form of Horsted Keynes are classed as 'modern', but of note the fields to the north and to west of the village, around Jeffreys Farm, did classify as modern. All others were medieval.

The AONB assessments of impact on the protected landscape for Horsted Keynes showed only 2 sites to have a 'Low impact' on the character elements. Site SA29 was one of these sites, but the above summarised critique of the current planning application shows that assessment to be under scrutiny. The second site is SHLAA Site 68: Farm Buildings, Jeffreys Farm.

Site 68 is 0.75ha of dilapidated farm buildings. The site should be considered as Previously Developed Land as it is adjacent to existing housing, contiguous with the village, currently occupied by dilapidated farm buildings and as such an obvious candidate for sustainable development in accordance with MSDC Local Plan Policy DP4, and also potential for a small-scale development within the AONB as part of DP16. It is one of only two sites in HK assessed as Low AONB impact (for up to 18 houses), and is also adjacent to modern field systems to the north and east. A well-designed layout adhering to the AONB Management plan could deliver a unique development (see promoters vision in Appendix 7) especially when replacing existing built form with similar scale and vernacular.

As such site 68 would seem to be a good candidate for allocation, and also to fulfil the NPPF and district policies. However, the site was screened out at the Stage 3 assessment due to perceived access issues. The access assumptions are based on two factually incorrect conclusions ('*significant conflict with the existing junction (creating a crossroads)*' and, '*third party land ownership*' restricting visibility). This has been highlighted on several occasions prior to MSDC Reg 18 and Reg 19, but no attempt was made to change this qualitative information. This is part of a due process statement supplied for the hearings under MIQ 1.1 (ii), suggesting the site should not have been screened out of the process, and should have progressed to be a realistic alternative to be tested by the SA.

There is no evidence-based reason, or apparent rational professional judgement reason for excluding Site 68: Jeffreys Farm Buildings at Stage 3, that then prevents its consideration at the SA stage for a **small scale development in the AONB**. This appears to be a **highly sustainable site** for the proposed scale of development and its exclusion appears to be perverse and untenable.

The screening out of site 68 has been challenged on several occasions through regulation consultations over several years (See MIQ 1.1 (ii) statements), highlighting the lack of due process in the decision to not take it forward to be assessed as a realistic alternative site. MSDC has given NO response in the Consultation reports to these comments made about Site Selection Paper 3, an absolutely critical screening step in this stage of the process. How can it be tenable that these critical judgements to screen out sites from the process are subject to no scrutiny and no further justification by MSDC when valid comments are raised through consultation? Site 68 is a highly sustainable site capable of delivering a highly favoured small-scale development in the AONB.

In summary, the allocation of site SA29 does not adequately fulfil the NPPF, or district plan policies (DP6) as it provides little provision for the protection and enhancement of its environment, landscape, or biodiversity. Given the importance of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) as a national policy constraint the allocation and more specifically the housing number proposed for allocation is not justified in the AONB especially. MSDC do not consider the site to be a 'major development' however in the context of the village of Horsted Keynes, with about 450 homes comprising the main village, 30 homes on a green field site is a very 'major development' and should be assessed accordingly.

Other than windfall development and the very large Hamsland and Challoners social housing developments many years ago, a series of smaller scale developments have taken place within the village over the past 50-60 years which have typically been of c. 10 to 20 new homes e.g. Rixons Orchard 6, Hillcrest 9, Lucas 12, Boxes Lane 14, Jefferies 16, Rixons 17, Cheeleys 20.

Based on this experience, I would contend that 25 dwellings should reflect an appropriate threshold for 'major development' within Horsted Keynes, particularly as most infill development potential has now been exhausted and all of the Horsted Keynes sites currently under consideration are on the perimeter of the village, heightening their sensitivity to AONB considerations. But consideration needs to be made to the housing density in addition to the total number on a particular site, as mitigation measures need to be accommodated on sites in addition to housing, so a dense development of 25 on a small site would not have an acceptable impact on the AONB.

	<p>The SSP3 selection process has however screened out a highly sustainable site (68) that is appropriate for a <u>highly desirable ‘small scale’ proposal in the AONB</u> which is not only of low impact to the AONB but would also fulfil policy DP16. Given the site has extensive existing built form, it is a highly sustainable option and could maintain that sustainability whilst providing additional numbers to the 6 houses proposed in the SADPD process.</p>
Reference to other DPD documents	<p>DPD1 DPD5 NPPF High Weald Management Plan - O4 Site selection Paper 3 – SSP3 (both Housing, and Appendix B site proformas)</p>
How could the document be made sound?	<p>The density of proposed draft allocations in the AONB and the National Park should be reviewed to adequately mitigate provision for the protection and enhancement of its environment, landscape, or biodiversity (as per the NPPF ‘<i>The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited</i>’), but mindful that there is a need to ensure sufficient supply of affordable housing in rural communities.</p> <p>The threshold for ‘major development’ in a rural settlement within the AONB, but outside its current Built Up Area Boundary, should be set at 25 dwellings, but a suitable housing density should also be considered when allocating smaller sites to enable adequate space for mitigation for biodiversity loss on site.</p> <p>Specific to Horsted Keynes the allocation of site SA29 should be scrutinised and the density proposed for the site reduced to allow for adequate mitigation and for the protection and enhancement of its environment, landscape and biodiversity, as outlined in the numerous submissions to Reg 18, Reg 19, Reg 14 and the planning application DM/20/4692. If the tree belt along the access is under threat the site should not be allocated until an alternative access is available.</p> <p>Site 68: Jeffreys Farm Buildings should be reassessed at stage 3 of the Site selection process as it fulfils DP16 being a small-scale proposal which would have a low impact on the AONB, and the reuse of previously developed land would be compatible with the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty of the AONB, making the site highly sustainable.</p>
What is the precise change that is sought?	<p>The threshold for ‘major development’ in a rural settlement within the AONB, but outside its current Built Up Area Boundary, should be set at 25 dwellings, with a suitable housing density also being considered when allocating smaller sites to enable adequate space for mitigation for biodiversity loss on site.</p> <p>Site SA29 should have the density of housing reduced. The site access road threatens the trees along its length and unless a guaranteed protection of these trees is possible the site should not be allocated until an alternative access is available.</p> <p>Site 68 Jeffreys Farm Buildings should be considered for allocation by the inspector. Alternatively, as the Parish Council have withdrawn support for the site selection DPD, the inspector could withdraw the allocations for Horsted Keynes from the DPD and allow the Parish Council to allocate sites to fulfil DP6 housing numbers for the village.</p>
Appendices	<p>Appendix 1 - Holding objection to application DM/20/4692 on SA29 by Horsted Keynes Parish Council in 3 parts:- https://padocs.midsussex.gov.uk/PublicDocuments/00759920.pdf https://padocs.midsussex.gov.uk/PublicDocuments/00759917.pdf https://padocs.midsussex.gov.uk/PublicDocuments/00757401.pdf</p> <p>Appendix 2- minutes of Parish Council meeting withdrawing support for the MSDC Site Allocations DPD (30/3/21) https://horstedkeynesparishcouncil.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/EGM300321PCMinsfinal.pdf</p> <p>Appendix 3 - Responses to Reg 14 consultation of the Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan https://horstedkeynesparishcouncil.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/20210107-HKNDP-Summary-of-Representations-1.pdf</p> <p>Appendix 4 – High Weald AONB Advice on Horsted Keynes SHELAA Sites Oct 2018 https://horstedkeynesparishcouncil.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/09-AONB-advice-on-Horsted-Keynes-SHELAA-Sites.pdf</p> <p>Appendix 5 - AONB letter to HKPC regarding medieval field systems in Horsted Keynes Oct 2016 https://horstedkeynesparishcouncil.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/3a.-HWAONB-Response-to-Horsted-Keynes-Reg-14-additional-sites-002.pdf</p>

Appendix 6 – AONB map of medieval field systems in Horsted Keynes

<https://horstedkeynesparishcouncil.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/AONB-character-components.pdf>

Appendix 7 – Aspiration images for the development style and form of Site 68 Jeffrey's Farm buildings

AS ATTACHMENT TO EMAIL