THAKEHAM

District Plan Examination

Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039

Hearings Statement relating to: Matter 7 – MM82 – Land East of London Road, Albourne

Submitted by Thakeham Homes

October 2026

MM 82: Land East of London Road, Albourne

Issue a) The character of the area

- ***compatibility with Albourne in scale and character***
- ***effect on heritage assets***

2.1. As set out in Thakeham's response to the Main Modifications Consultation, the principle of an allocation at Land East of London Road, Albourne, is **strongly supported.** It is recognised as a Category 3 (medium village) in the settlement hierarchy set out in the emerging Local plan, and therefore it is appropriate for development to be located in such a settlement

2.2. As highlighted in the course of the Local Plan hearings (notably Thakeham's Hearing Statement in relation to *Matter 5 - The Spatial Strategy*), the comments of the Inspector, and the post-hearing guidance provided to the Council by the Inspector, there is a clear, well-evidenced need for additional housing delivery in Mid Sussex. This is in order to meet not only Mid Sussex's own needs, but to assist in delivering the identified needs of neighbouring, highly-constrained authorities (such as Crawley and Brighton). Accordingly MSDC has been directed to explore additional sites to increase housing delivery over the plan-period to 1,200-1,300dpa, to address clear identified deficiencies in housing delivery from the wider Sussex Coast Housing Market Area and other, more northern parts that are firmly within the Gatwick Diamond and at the edge of Crawley (North West Sussex HMA). As set out in MS-TP4, this is to include an additional 3,753 units to account for approximately half of Crawley's unmet need, and a further 1,075 dwellings to address Brighton's unmet need (which impacts upon the southern housing market area).

2.3. As identified in Appendix 2 of SSP8, Land East of London Road Albourne was identified as being suitable for further testing. The northern part of the site is located on the eastern side of London Road, whilst the settlement boundary captures the existing dwellings on the western side of London Road. The site is therefore directly opposite the existing defined settlement area. Additionally, existing dwellings and built form are already present along the eastern side of London Road, extending further south than the southern extent of the proposal site.

2.4. Four listed buildings are identified as sitting between the B2118 and the site (Elm House, Mole Manor, Tipnoaks and Hilbrook House). All listed buildings are separated from the Site by a cluster of mature trees (in the case of Elm House, Mole Manor, Tipnoaks) and mature trees and hedgerow on the Site's boundary in the case of Hilbrook House. As a result, with development already extending to the north and south of the heritage assets, and there being extremely limited intervisibility between the site and the listed buildings, development of further residential dwellings in the vicinity of the listed buildings - which will not be readily visible in the existing streetscene - will not impact on the heritage assets or their setting.

2.5. As set out in MM82, the southern part of the Site will be retained as recreational open space and the whole site will not be developed. Whilst Thakeham consider this approach to be acceptable in principle, the current MM document drafting is not sufficiently clear as to the extent of land to be retained as recreational open space. It is not defined either on an updated policies map provided as part of the Main Modifications, or in the site plan that accompanies MM82 and shown either in the MM document or the separate site-specific appendices. The vision document prepared for the Site and shared with MSDC contains an illustrative site masterplan which sets out an indicative area of open space approximately 100m between the end of development and the southern boundary of the Site. The area of open space sought on the site therefore either needs to be defined on area terms, a geographical feature, or clearly identified on a plan.

2.6. Given the existing presence of ribbon development along the east of London Road and the proposed inclusion of MM82, Thakeham consider that it would be appropriate for the settlement boundary of Albourne be updated as part of the Local Plan to include the existing ribbon

development present to the east of London Road, and the area of Land East of London Road that will be subject to development. This will ensure that the development area remains compatible in scale and character with the existing settlement of Albourne, whilst also ensuring that the settlement boundary of Albourne better reflects the extent of existing development. In the context of the Plan as a whole, this change would be relatively minor.

2.7. Of the sites considered suitable for further testing the Sustainability Appraisal Main Modifications Report identifies that Land East of London Road, Albourne scores comparatively with all other sites considered in Albourne that were taken forward for further testing, scoring highly in the categories of 'Housing', 'Community and crime' and 'Economic Regeneration'. The Site has therefore been assessed as being both suitable and compatible with Albourne against the metrics set out in the Sustainability appraisal.

Issue b) Access and Movement

- ***movement patterns to and from the site***
- ***bus links and footpath links***
- ***the improvements at Hassocks Station***

2.8. Movement patterns within the site have been considered as part of the illustrative layout prepared and provided to MSDC at earlier stages of plan preparation.

2.9. The site layout will provide pedestrian connections to the existing public footpath ALB-41HU that runs along the western boundary and provides connections to the wider public right of way network, whilst the existing public footpath that provides access directly onto London Road will be enhanced to retain and improve pedestrian access directly onto London Road.

2.10. Site access for vehicles will be from the north via Albourne Road. This will also provide pedestrian access onto Albourne Road, where the existing footpath network provides connectivity to Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks to the east, and Sayers Common to the north.

2.11. Existing bus services operate in Albourne with bus stops on London Road, operating between Brighton and Crawley, and other settlements along the M23 corridor. The enhancement of the existing footpath to the west will ensure this remains readily accessible to future residents.

2.12. The need for financial contributions towards improvements at Hassocks station as part of the MM82 draft site allocation are noted. The recognition of such contributions being spread across all sites in Albourne, Hurstpierpoint, Sayers Common and Hassocks is considered appropriate.

Issue c) Social and community infrastructure and open space

- ***accessibility to social and community services and facilities***
- ***open space and sports facilities***

2.13. The Site will have good pedestrian, cycle and vehicular access, allowing connectivity to nearby social and community facilities. The Site allocation also includes the provision of play spaces and open space areas that will deliver publicly accessible green open space.

2.14. MM82 identifies the provision of outdoor sports facilities as part of a proposed allocation. Outdoor sports facilities often require the setting out and management of a formal pitch or area, and potentially a changing facility. The MSDC Playing pitch strategy has identified a need for sports facilities as part of the southern 'sub-group', the majority of the facilities and need is centred on the Northern Arc and at the Centre for Community Sport in the vicinity of the Triangle Leisure Centre and St Paul's Catholic College. Albourne has been identified as part of the southern 'sub-group' but has not been identified as having a need for, or identified as a preferred location for, any type of outdoor sporting facility. Thakeham therefore has no objection to providing sports facilities in principle, but queries whether this could be appropriately achieved on Site once all other aspects (such as the delivery of housing, suitable drainage, vehicular and

pedestrian access routes, and BNG) have been accounted for, and whether financial contributions would be more appropriate in this instance. Thakeham would therefore welcome clarification as to what extent of facilities are anticipated to be delivered, and the need for supplementary development as a result.

Issue d) Site conditions

- ***habitats***
- ***surface water, ponds and flood risk***
- ***foul drainage***
- ***noise environment***

2.15. As set out in the representations to the Main Modifications Consultation, Criterion 10 requires the enhancement of the adjacent priority habitat (deciduous woodland), having regard to the objectives of the West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy. It is noted that this woodland falls outside of the Thakeham's ownership boundary, albeit that it directly abuts the western boundary. As currently drafted, Criterion 10 does not make this distinction clear, and is capable of being read as requiring Thakeham to secure works or management measures over third-party land.

2.16. Thakeham therefore requests that the policy wording is amended to confirm that (i) the priority habitat lies outside the Site's ownership boundary; and (ii) the applicant's obligation extends only to providing appropriate habitat management and enhancement measures within the Site boundary, having regard to the WSLNRS objectives. This amendment would ensure the policy is effective and deliverable in accordance with the tests of soundness set out at NPPF (2023) paragraph 35.

2.17. In the context of the Plan, when read as a whole, the changes are relatively minor.

Word count: 1,545

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