

Hearing Statement for Spatial Strategy submitted by The Woodland, Flora & Fauna Group re Soundness of the Process – Matter 5c of the MSDC 2026 Examination updates in relation to sites DPSC1 & DPSC12.

Countryside damage is being inflicted on the remaining area of the natural landscape separating Hurstpierpoint and Burgess Hill by the inclusion of planning proposals DPSC1 and DPSC12.

This area has already been damaged by previous expansion of Burgess Hill town and expansion of the Hurstpierpoint village settlement respectively.

The proposed site of DPSC1 which is detached from the Burgess Hill urban border, removes a further section of the greenfield boundary of countryside, which was previously promised to be protected for Hurstpierpoint Parish by the formation of the Green Crescent, which is now called the Green Circle. To further encroach into this area and reduce greenfield landscape, threatens all the natural landscape features and wildlife contained therein.

The countryside around Hurstpierpoint is of high value in biodiversity terms. The landscape is also of great importance to nature and the population who have settled here.

The new development proposals as presented in the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 Update are very damaging to the Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common area and impact on previously introduced measures to improve the natural environment for the benefit of flora & fauna. These measures were commenced in 2004, undertaken by local volunteers, and benefitted landscape, ecology, and resident well-being.

These development proposals remove sections of greenfield countryside that is of extreme value to the local residents, and contributes greatly to the rural settlement identity they cherish, which is the reason the majority chose to reside here.

The proposals as described in DPSC1 & DPSC12 conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework which require policies and decisions to 'contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment'.

These development proposals, with recommendations to be interspersed with walkways and green corridors, are of little value in nature terms as a replacement to the current footpaths and valued landscape areas that currently exist, so will significantly devalue the natural environmental status of the area and the open countryside amenity that is cherished by local residents.

This is also a landscape now threatened by the DPSC1 development proposal, where frogs, newts and toads currently exist in ponds which require continuation of breeding migration pathways across the adjacent drovers' way called High Hatch Lane, to adjacent ponds on the far side, and where previous measures by The Woodland, Flora & Fauna Group have nurtured their presence and safeguarded their passage of migration. It also contains an area of semi-natural ancient woodland to the south, in which many species of indigenous wildlife inhabit.

The location of this proposed development is some distance from the Green Crescent / Green Circle boundary and so renders all remaining landscape between as virtually useless in wildlife and biodiversity terms, as well as destroying a valued section of supposedly protected dividing countryside separating the two settlements. Introduced green corridors and other net gain mitigation measures proposed to provide compensation, have been proven to be extremely ineffective, so will undoubtedly ensure its drastic decline in biodiversity terms. This brings into severe questioning, the soundness of the spatial strategy process of this Local Plan proposal and the unnecessary incursion into valued landscape for damaging greenfield development.

The DPSC12 proposal removes countryside between the existing western boundary of the Hurstpierpoint village settlement and the conservation area formed around Langton Lane, which is an ancient drover's way with high conservation status and restricted access to vehicles. This development if proceeded with, will severely impact on this valued setting of rural character and ensure its certain devaluation and decline.

The two affected areas form part of landscape included in the formation of a barn owl conservation area created by The Woodland, Flora & Fauna Group over two decades to support a species which was classified as endangered. This was work that has taken thousands of volunteer manhours to achieve and elevate it to its current high value conservation status. It has been a long, hard, and volunteer intensive project which has achieved remarkable success, so must be acknowledged and protected.

With Low Wealden countryside areas now so limited and us having previously responded to appeals from MSDC Officers to form our group of volunteers in 2004 to study, protect and enhance our local countryside, these proposals are either borne out of ignorance of the ongoing initiative, or are in complete disregard of the natural environmental consequences and the two decades of volunteer effort that has been expended to achieve them.

We therefore urge close MSDC consultation with local groups such as ourselves, to determine the features of value in our local Low Wealden landscape and produce a policy document like other Districts have, to protect them. Without such a document the whole basis of spatial strategy consideration for these sites is flawed, and should be rejected so that they can be reconsidered.

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On behalf of **The Woodland, Flora & Fauna Group**.

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