Statement of Common Ground

MM90: Land to the West of Woodhurst Farm, Old Brighton Road South, Pease Pottage

Mid Sussex District Plan 2021–2039 Examination

Parties: Mid Sussex District Council and Thakeham Homes Limited

Introduction

1. This Statement of Common Ground ("SoCG") has been prepared jointly by Mid Sussex District Council ("the Council") and Thakeham Homes Limited ("Thakeham") in relation to proposed allocation MM90: Land to the West of Woodhurst Farm, Old Brighton Road South, Pease Pottage.

2. The purpose of the SoCG is to identify those matters which are agreed between the parties, thereby assisting the Inspector and narrowing the issues requiring discussion at the examination hearing.

3. The Inspector's agenda identifies four principal areas for consideration in relation to MM90: strategic-level exceptional circumstances and the public interest; effects upon the National Landscape; access and transport; and site MM90's relationship to employment and social infrastructure.

Housing Need and Contribution to the Spatial Strategy

4. The parties agree that the District Plan needs to make appropriate provision for housing over the plan period, including an appropriate contribution towards unmet housing needs arising from neighbouring authorities.

5. The parties agree that there is a need for additional housing delivery through the Mid Sussex District Plan and that the Council has been required through the examination process to consider additional allocations.

6. The Inspector's post-hearing work resulted in the Council examining opportunities to increase housing delivery to 1,200–1,300 dwellings per annum. The Council's evidence identifies provision for an additional 3,753 dwellings towards Crawley's unmet housing need and 1,075 dwellings towards Brighton's unmet need.

7. MM90 comprises an allocation for 700 dwellings and forms part of the Council's proposed response to identified housing needs.

8. The parties agree that MM90 would make a significant material contribution towards housing delivery during the plan period.

9. The parties agree that the geographical relationship between MM90, Pease Pottage and Crawley are relevant to consideration of site MM90's role in the spatial strategy.

10. Pease Pottage is identified as a Category 3 settlement within the settlement hierarchy.

11. The parties agree that the allocation of MM90 would assist in providing additional housing in close geographical proximity to Crawley.

Deliverability and Trajectory

12. The parties agree that MM90 has an indicative capacity of 700 dwellings.

13. Thakeham confirms that site MM90 is available for development and is being actively promoted for residential-led development.

14. The parties have not identified any overriding technical constraints which, in principle, prevents residential-led development from being delivered on site MM90, subject to further detailed assessment, appropriate mitigation and compliance with the requirements of the allocation policy.

15. The development would be brought forward through a landscape-led masterplanning process which responds to the environmental characteristics and constraints of the site MM90 including its location within the High Weald National Landscape.

16. The parties agree that the policy framework and the development management process is an appropriate process to secure appropriate and satisfactory requirements relating to access, landscape, ecology, green infrastructure and other necessary mitigation.

17. The parties agree that MM90 is available and achievable and capable of delivering its proposed contribution to housing supply within the Plan period.

Access and Highways

18. The parties agree that the precise access arrangements and associated highway mitigation would be subject to detailed design and consideration through the development management process.

19. The allocation presents opportunities to improve sustainable transport connectivity between site MM90, Pease Pottage, Crawley and beyond.

20. The existing Fastway 20 service provides connections from the Woodgate area of Pease Pottage to Crawley, Gatwick Airport and Horley. Thakeham's evidence identifies the service as approximately 800m from site MM90.

21. The Proposed Development is capable of incorporating a bus route through site MM90 to facilitate the extension and/or enhancement of bus services.

22. Existing Public Right of Way SLA-2S crosses the site east-west and would be retained and enhanced as part of the Proposed Development in accordance with the requirements of the policy.

Environmental Constraints

23. The parties agree that site MM90 contains environmental features and landscape characteristics which need to inform the layout and design of development.

24. The principal environmental considerations include:

    - ancient woodland and other priority habitat woodland;
    - existing hedgerows and field boundaries;
    - watercourses and ponds;
    - priority habitats;
    - Public Rights of Way;
    - landscape character; and
    - MM90's location within the High Weald National Landscape.

25. The Council's ENV22 assessment of major development in the High Weald National Landscape specifically identifies the potential for adverse impact on the Protected Landscape and opportunities for enhancement and mitigation relating to the pond, watercourse, Public Right of Way, woodland, Ancient Woodland buffers, field boundaries, Finches Field and views towards the countryside.

26. The parties agree that the existing Ancient Woodland will be retained and appropriately buffered from built development as well as ensuring enhancements in accordance with policy requirements.

27. The parties agree that existing woodland, hedgerows and landscape features should form part of the landscape and green infrastructure framework for the Proposed Development.

28. The parties agree that water features will be incorporated within the green infrastructure strategy and appropriate buffers provided.

29. The parties agree that national policy, District Plan policy requirements and the masterplanning process provide the mechanism for avoiding and minimising environmental effects and securing appropriate mitigation and enhancement.

National Landscape Facts and Agreed Evidence Base

30. MM90 lies within the High Weald National Landscape.

31. Site MM90 extends to approximately 39 hectares.

32. The parties agree that great weight must be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty within the National Landscape in accordance with national policy.

33. The parties agree that site MM90 has a semi-rural experience from its location within the countryside but there are some nearby existing urbanising influences such as built development and the A23 road corridor, although the impact of these influences varies across the Site.

34. The assessment in ENV22 concludes that built development would result in significant changes in the local landscape and identifies that development of MM90 would result in a substantial adverse

impact because of site MM90's size and setting. The assessment also identifies a series of measures that could be taken to minimise potential harm.

35. The parties agree that appropriate mitigation could include the retention and buffering of Ancient Woodland, reinforcement of existing landscape characteristics and structure, retention/enhancement of field boundaries, consideration of the historic routeway and Public Right of Way, and an appropriate relationship with MM90's water features.

36. The parties agree that the extent and significance of residual landscape effects following mitigation is ultimately a matter of planning judgement, at the planning application stage.

Strategic exceptional circumstances

37. The parties agree that consideration of MM90 must be in accordance with legislation and national policy. This includes the high level of protection afforded to the National Landscape and to have regard to any exceptional circumstances and the public interest test which may include the strategic need for housing, including unmet needs arising from neighbouring authorities.

38. The Council's evidence base has assessed National Landscape sites as part of its response to the requirement to identify additional housing allocations. Document ENV22 forms part of that evidence.

Infrastructure and Services

39. Site MM90 is adjacent to Pease Pottage and is located in close proximity to Crawley.

40. Crawley represents a significant location for employment, services and facilities accessible from Pease Pottage.

41. Existing public transport connections are available between Pease Pottage and Crawley, with opportunities for further enhancement arising from the development of MM90.

42. The Proposed Development of MM90 would be required to mitigate its impacts upon infrastructure through appropriate planning conditions, planning obligations and/or infrastructure provision, as applicable.

43. The parties agree that any effects upon infrastructure in Crawley are capable of being assessed and, where mitigation is required, addressed through the development management process.

44. As set out in policy requirements, site MM90 will also provide community benefits by providing on-site sports provision in the form of an enclosed 4G pitch and two covered padel courts, and a new cricket square on the existing playing field at Finches Field. There will also be upgrades to MacNaughton Hall to incorporate a small café/ community shop and the provision of an on-site early years facility.

Matters Agreed

45. The parties agree that:

a) MM90 would make a material contribution towards meeting identified housing needs and the housing requirement of the Plan.
b) The geographical relationship between MM90 and Crawley is relevant to the role the allocation can perform within the spatial strategy.
c) MM90 is available for residential development.
d) The allocation has an indicative capacity of 700 dwellings.
e) MM90 can be masterplanned having regard to its identified environmental and landscape constraints.
f) Ancient woodland and other important landscape features must be retained and appropriately buffered within the development.
g) Appropriate green infrastructure, landscape mitigation and open space must be incorporated within the development.
h) The Proposed Development is capable of providing enhanced walking, cycling and public transport connections.
i) Infrastructure impacts arising from the Proposed Development can be assessed and appropriately mitigated.
j) The Council's evidence identifies both adverse landscape effects and opportunities to minimise those effects through mitigation.

46. Subject to appropriate mitigation, no identified environmental, highway or infrastructure issue is considered incapable in principle of resolution through the planning and design process.

47. The parties agree that MM90 is available and capable of delivering a substantial contribution towards identified housing needs during the Plan period; that appropriate access and sustainable transport connections can be provided; that identified environmental and infrastructure constraints are capable of being addressed through masterplanning, mitigation and the development management process; and that development can be brought forward through a landscape-led approach which responds to MM90's location within the High Weald National Landscape

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Signatures

Signed for Mid Sussex District Council



Name: (Eric Owens)
Position: Interim Assistant Director Planning and Sustainable Economy
Date: 23.10 26

Signed for Thakeham Homes Limited

Name:  (Christopher Brake)
Position: Planning Director
Date: 23 October 2026