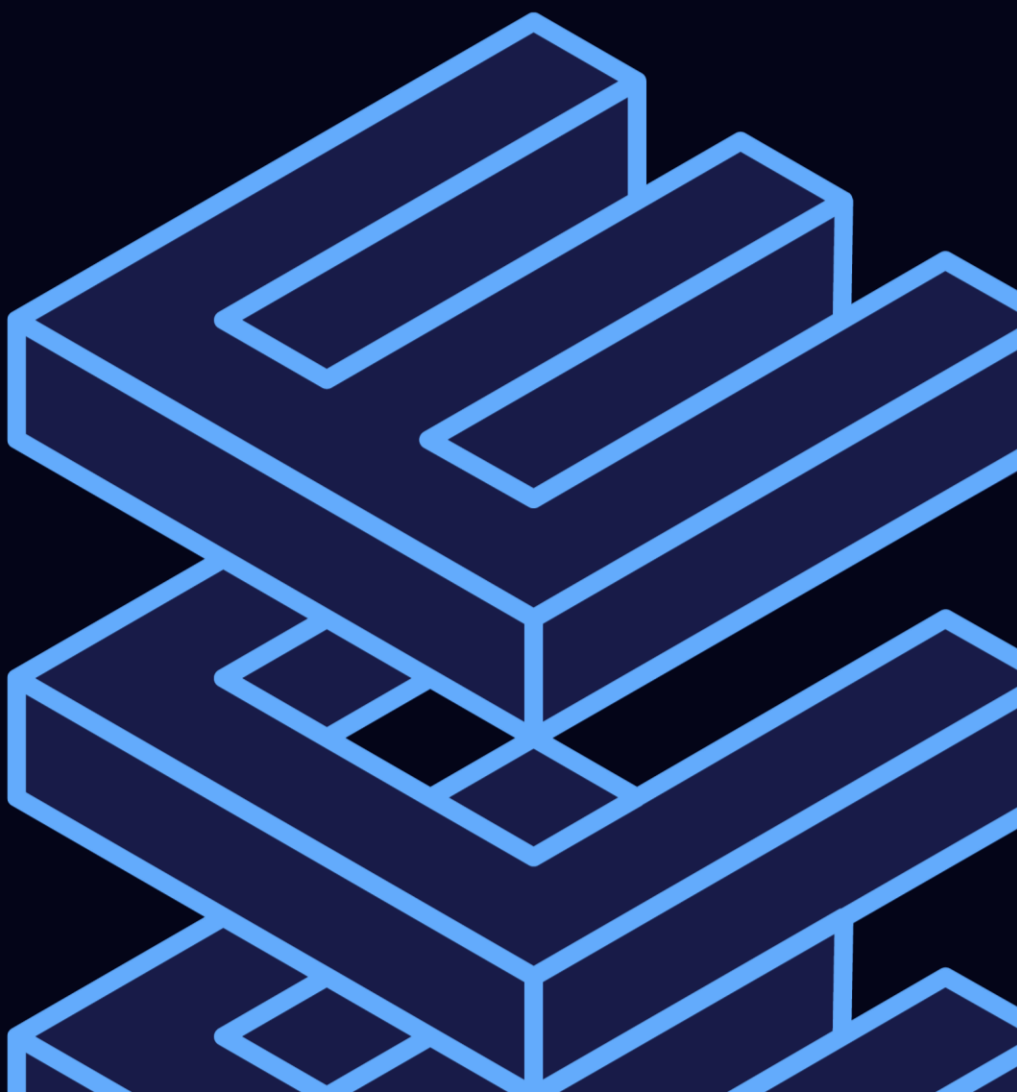
ECE Planning

# MSDC Local Plan Examination Hearing Statement

## MM74: Land North of Willow Way and Talbot Mead, Cuckfield Road

October 2026



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| Project Name: | Land at Cuckfield Road, Hurstpierpoint |
| Location | Land at Cuckfield Road, Hurstpierpoint |
| Client: | Danworth Farm Limited |
| File Reference: | P2316 |

| Issue | Date | Author | Checked | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 07/10/2026 | M Smith | S Sykes | Initial Draft |
| B | 15/10/2026 | M Smith | S Sykes | Client Issue |
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# 1. Introduction

1.1. This Hearing Statement has been prepared by ECE Planning on behalf of Danworth Farm Limited in relation to the draft site allocation at **MM74: Land North of Willow Way and Talbot Mead, Cuckfield Road, Hurstpierpoint.**

1.2. Danworth Farms Ltd supports the inclusion of the site within the emerging Mid Sussex District Plan for approximately 150 dwellings. The site is a sustainable addition to the Plan, capable of being delivered in the first five years of the plan period.

1.3. The site has been subject to technical assessment, pre-application engagement with Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) and consultation with West Sussex County Council (WSCC) as Local Highway Authority. No fundamental technical or in-principle constraint has been identified.

1.4. The site promoter submitted representations on the Main Modifications consultation, supporting the allocation while seeking amendments to certain policy requirements to ensure that they are clear, proportionate, effective and deliverable. Following a subsequent meeting with MSDC officers, the Council confirmed through its draft Hearing Statement that it broadly supports the principal amendments sought by the site promoter.

1.5. This Hearing Statement responds to the matters raised in the Inspector's agenda and sets out the agreed policy wording with MSDC, which is set out below for completeness:

***1. Provide suitable access to the site from either side of Cuckfield Road.***

***2. The development will provide a suitable landscape buffer (of at least 5-10m in width) along the northern and north-eastern edges of the site to minimise the perception of coalescence with Burgess Hill and DPSC1: Land West of Burgess Hill, having regard to the objectives of the West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy***

***3. Informed by a Heritage Statement and LVIA, views from the site to the Grade II Listed Building 'Hurstpierpoint College' in the east and to the South Downs National Park in the south will be protected.***

***4. A new footway along Cuckfield Road, Danworth Lane and Chalkers Lane, within the site to allow access to Willow Way and Bus Stop reference 4400MS0199, will be provided, supported by a crossing point, which will provide a direct pedestrian access to the western part of the site.***

***5. Provision of pedestrian and/or cycle paths connecting the site, where feasible/viable to do so, with Court Bushes Recreation Ground and eastwards towards Chalkers Lane to connect with the existing PROW and cycle routes through Hurstpierpoint and north to the Arc and beyond.***

***6. Improve and upgrade existing PROW reference HSC-31HU.***

***7. Provide a sensitive, informal woodland / riverside trail walk along the river corridor and enhance woodland having regard to the objectives of the West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy.***

***8. Consider the watercourse to the south of the site and the nearby ponds in the site drainage strategy to avoid direct and indirect impacts.***

***9. Address any impacts associated with the Brick Clay (Weald) Minerals Safeguarding Area and Waste site safeguarding area (Former Hurstpierpoint Sewage Works).***

***10. Where necessary and appropriate to do so, make a proportionate financial contribution towards the provision of sustainable transport measures, such as bus service improvements or re-routing services to serve the site.***

# 2. Movement

## 2.1. The Access Points

2.1.1. The site promoter, MSDC and WSCC agree that suitable and safe vehicular and pedestrian access to Land North of Willow Way and Talbot Mead, Cuckfield Road can be achieved.

2.1.2. Draft Policy MM74 includes Criterion 1 which requires the development to '*provide suitable access to the site from either side of Cuckfield Road.*'

2.1.3. The site comprises two parcels of land located either side of Cuckfield Road. Existing agricultural access points currently serve both parcels. The emerging proposals provide for these access points to be repositioned and widened to create two bellmouth junctions, 45m apart, each serving the parcel to which it relates.

2.1.4. Pedestrian access points are also proposed adjacent to the vehicular accesses and to the southern end of the site, at Cuckfield Road and onto Chalkers Lane.

2.1.5. The access strategy has been considered through pre-application with WSCC Highways Authority. WSCC's response dated 29 January 2026 identified no apparent issues with the proposed access arrangements. It confirmed that the works would be subject to a Stage One Road Safety Audit and accepted the visibility splays in principle, subject to the speed survey being included in the future Transport Assessment.

2.1.6. The access arrangements are therefore capable of being delivered in accordance with relevant highway standards and Criterion 1 is justified.

## 2.2. Effect on the Road Network

2.2.1. The site promoter and MSDC agree that 150 dwellings can be accommodated on the highway network without a severe or unacceptable impact, subject to appropriate mitigation.

2.2.2. MSDC's Hearing Statement also considers that the MM74 requirements would **positively** affect the road network, through policy criteria requiring active travel routes and modal shift.

2.2.3. Updated strategic transport modelling assessed the 35 additional sites proposed for inclusion in the Plan against the Regulation 19 Mid Sussex Transport Model. This is set out in the Scenario 7 Modelling and Results Technical Note, which concludes that the results do not demonstrate impacts that would be "severe" under the NPPF and therefore support the Plan's soundness.

2.2.4. The strategic modelling identifies the A273/B2114 Stonepound Crossroads as the principal junction requiring further mitigation near the site. WSCC has therefore proposed an additional MM74 requirement, through the Main Modifications for a proportionate contribution towards sustainable transport measures benefiting junction users. The site promoter accepts the principle of such a contribution.

2.2.5. WSCC's representation also proposed improving and increasing bus service frequencies. However, this wording as drafted could impose an open-ended obligation for indefinite funding of commercially operated services, which would go beyond the statutory tests for planning obligations.

2.2.6. The site promoter does not object to the principle of the second WSCC criterion, provided that any contribution is proportionate, evidence-based and complies with the relevant statutory tests. Therefore following discussions with MSDC, it has been agreed that the additional criteria should be reworded to be a proportionate contribution and allow flexibility at planning application stage. The agreed wording is:

***"Where necessary and appropriate to do so, make a proportionate financial contribution towards the provision of sustainable transport measures, such as bus service improvements or re-routing services to serve the site."***

2.2.7. This will ensure relevant infrastructure can be delivered in relation to the site, to mitigate against impacts on the road network.

2.2.8. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan also identifies several highway and sustainable transport requirements associated with residential allocations in Hurstpierpoint including improvements to pedestrian and cycle routes, links to existing PROWs, access to Hassocks railway station and bus services, and proportionate contributions towards cumulative highway and junction impacts.

2.2.9. By virtue of Criterion 4, 5, 6 and 10, MM74 can address several of these requirements through on-site and off-site works and proportionate financial contributions. This would help mitigate the allocation's highway impacts, encourage modal shift and positively affect the local road network.

2.2.10. In particular, the proposed Chalkers Lane connection would link the site to the existing pedestrian and cycle route HSC-62-1HU, improving access towards Hassocks Station and surrounding facilities. It would also respond to local requests for improved pedestrian infrastructure.

2.2.11. MM74's location on the northern edge of Hurstpierpoint also provides an opportunity to distribute trips north and east, including towards Burgess Hill and the wider network, rather than directing them exclusively through the settlement centre and High Street. This is relevant when considering both the site's individual transport effects and the cumulative effects of development around Hurstpierpoint.

2.2.12. Together with the proposed site-specific infrastructure and active travel measures, these connections would improve permeability for existing and future residents, provide realistic alternatives to car travel for local journeys and distribute movement more effectively across the local network.

2.2.13. MM74 should therefore be assessed having regard to its location, access strategy and mitigation package, rather than solely by reference to the cumulative effect of all proposed development in Hurstpierpoint. Subject to detailed assessment and mitigation through the planning application process, the site can come forward as a standalone allocation without causing a detrimental impact on the local road network.

2.2.14. Strategic transport evidence identifies no severe NPPF impacts or effects undermining the Plan's soundness. With the proposed access, active-travel connections, Chalkers Lane

improvements and proportionate transport contributions, MM74 can be appropriately accommodated within the network.

## 2.3. Road safety and mitigation measures

2.3.1. The principal access and transport mitigation measures are addressed in Sections 2.1 and 2.2. This section considers whether the proposed arrangements can be delivered safely and in accordance with highway standards.

2.3.2. WSCC's pre-application response dated 29 January 2026 identified no fundamental safety concerns with the proposed access arrangements. It confirmed that the access works would be subject to a Stage One Road Safety Audit and accepted the proposed visibility splays in principle, based on 85th-percentile recorded vehicle speeds, subject to the supporting speed survey being included in the future Transport Assessment.

2.3.3. WSCC also accepted the principle of the Chalkers Lane footway works, subject to detailed consideration of highway width, existing planting and overhanging vegetation. These matters relate to detailed design and can be addressed through the Transport Assessment, Road Safety Audit and subsequent highway approvals.

2.3.4. WSCC further suggested considering an extension of the existing 30 mph speed limit northwards along Cuckfield Road, reflecting the proposed extension of the built-up area and the location of the new accesses. The access arrangements are not dependent on this change; however, the site promoter will continue discussions with WSCC and is willing to fund any necessary process and associated signing and lining works if the extension is considered appropriate.

2.3.5. The evidence available demonstrates that the access and associated pedestrian infrastructure can be designed and delivered safely. MM74 is therefore justified and deliverable in respect of highway safety.

## 2.4. Sustainable Travel and the Footpath Network, including the ability to deliver the Policy Requirements

2.4.1. Several criteria of MM74 require improvements to sustainable transport and the existing footpath network. As amended through the Main Modifications consultation and agreed in the MSDC Hearing Statement, the relevant requirements are 4, 5, 6 and 7 (listed in Introduction).

2.4.2. Criterion 4 is capable of being delivered and has been tested through the WSCC pre-app process, as set out in this Hearing Statement, subject to detailed consideration of highway width, existing planting and overhanging vegetation.

2.4.3. Criterion 5, as amended, appropriately recognises that the connection towards Court Bushes Recreation Ground requires further investigation. A direct connection would require access across land outside the allocation boundary and under separate ownership (MSDC ownership), and a watercourse crossing. There are also potential ecological, arboricultural, topographical and engineering considerations associated with the construction of a bridge.

2.4.4. The amended wording (*where feasible/viable*) allows the connection to be properly explored without making delivery of the allocation dependent on third-party land or a technically inappropriate structure. The site promoter will continue to investigate the link through the planning application process and seek to deliver it where feasible and viable.

2.4.5. As set out in Section 2.2, the eastward connection to Chalkers Lane, linking with the existing PROW and cycle routes through Hurstpierpoint, has already been explored through the site's early proposals and a WSCC pre-application process.

2.4.6. WSCC's pre-application response confirms that the connection to the Chalkers Lane PROW is acceptable in principle. Matters remaining for detailed design include the highway boundary, the width of Chalkers Lane, and the relationship between the footway and existing hedgerows, planting and overhanging vegetation. The site promoter will work with WSCC to confirm the highway boundary and available width, and to agree any necessary vegetation management or localised design changes. The connection is therefore capable of being delivered.

2.4.7. The site promoter also supports Criterion 6. Improvements to PROW HSC-31HU will be considered alongside the wider movement strategy, with the alignment, surfacing, accessibility and management arrangements agreed through the planning application and consultation with the relevant authorities.

2.4.8. Criterion 7 provides an appropriate and proportionate basis for securing access to the woodland and river corridor. The requirement for a "sensitive, informal" trail allows the route, surfacing, lighting and management arrangements to respond to ecological, landscape, drainage and arboricultural considerations, without requiring a formal or engineered route in this sensitive area.

2.4.9. Overall, the sustainable transport and footpath requirements set out in the policy criteria of MM74 are considered deliverable. These measures provide an effective framework for improving connectivity within Hurstpierpoint without preventing delivery of the allocation.

# 3. Village character, heritage and the countryside

## 3.1. Effect on the separate identity of settlements

3.1.1. During the earlier stages of the Plan-making process, SHELAA site 1075 (now MM74) was not taken forward principally because of concerns regarding potential coalescence between Hurstpierpoint and Burgess Hill. Criterion 2 of MM74 directly addresses this concern by requiring *"a suitable landscape buffer (of at least 5–10m in width)"* along the northern boundary of the site.

3.1.2. Pre-application engagement with MSDC has confirmed that coalescence is not an impediment to development. The Council's February 2026 pre-application response confirmed that the issue *"is a matter of planning judgement rather than a technical constraint"* and could be addressed through an appropriate layout and landscape strategy.

3.1.3. The site promoter accepts that development must maintain the physical and perceptual separation between Hurstpierpoint and Burgess Hill. The site is separated from Burgess Hill by intervening countryside, undulating landform and established vegetation. The prominent ridgeline to the north limits intervisibility, while vegetation provide enclosure. As a result, the site would be experienced as an extension to Hurstpierpoint rather than as a continuation of Burgess Hill.

3.1.4. The addition of MM60: Land west and east of Malthouse Lane, Burgess Hill is acknowledged as a relevant change in the wider context. It will form part of the cumulative assessment of the relationship between the settlements. However, it would not make the settlements physically contiguous, and the intervening topography, landscape structure and areas of undeveloped land would continue to provide meaningful separation and allow the settlements to retain their separate identities. The site promoter also supports the MM60 requirement for a landscape buffer to the south.

3.1.5. Importantly, neither the Landscape Officer or South Downs National Park have objected to the allocation.

3.1.6. Therefore, the allocation would maintain the separate identities of Hurstpierpoint and Burgess Hill. The policy is therefore justified, proportionate and capable of being delivered alongside the proposed housing allocation.

## 3.2. Effect on Heritage Assets

3.2.1. The site is outside the Hurstpierpoint Conservation Area, which lies approximately 700 metres to the south, and approximately 500 metres from Hurstpierpoint College and Star House, both Grade II listed buildings. Intervening development, vegetation and topography mean that development would not harm their significance or setting.

3.2.2. The January 2026 pre-application discussions identified no in-principle heritage constraint. The emerging landscape-led approach retains and enhances vegetation, controls

building heights and considers key views towards Hurstpierpoint College and the South Downs National Park. Criterion 3 appropriately requires these matters to be assessed through a Heritage Statement and LVIA, which will accompany any future application and identify any necessary mitigation.

3.2.3. Furthermore, throughout the plan-making process, the SHELAA site pro forma consistently records that development would not have a negative impact on a conservation area or area of townscape character and would not affect listed buildings and the heritage officer has not objected to the allocation of the site. Therefore, MM74 demonstrates that heritage matters would not prevent delivery of the allocation.

## 3.3. Countryside and Wildlife

3.3.1. The site comprises agricultural land adjoining Hurstpierpoint and is not within a nationally designated landscape, SSSI, Local Nature Reserve or Ancient Woodland. Its principal environmental features are the southern woodland and watercourse, existing hedgerows and mature trees, and the northern ditch and vegetation. These features can be retained and enhanced through a landscape-led design. MSDC's pre-application discussions identified no technical or in-principle environmental constraint preventing development.

3.3.2. The site promoter supports a suitable northern and north-eastern landscape buffer having regard to the West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy, as required by criterion 2. This can provide visual separation and habitat enhancement through appropriate native planting.

3.3.3. The southern woodland and watercourse will be retained and protected. The drainage strategy will consider the watercourse and nearby ponds, avoid direct or indirect impacts and incorporate sustainable drainage and habitat opportunities.

3.3.4. A comprehensive suite of ecological surveys has been undertaken for the site, including surveys for bats, dormice and other protected species. The surveys have not identified any protected-species constraints that would preclude development.

3.3.5. The site offers opportunities for biodiversity net gain through habitat retention, woodland management, native planting and additional ecological features. The amended requirement for a sensitive, informal woodland/riverside trail appropriately balances public access with the protection of the woodland and watercourse, allowing surfacing, lighting and management to be determined through detailed design.

3.3.6. Subject to the MM74 safeguards and detailed technical assessment, the site can protect and enhance its principal countryside and ecological features. These matters do not prevent delivery of the allocation.

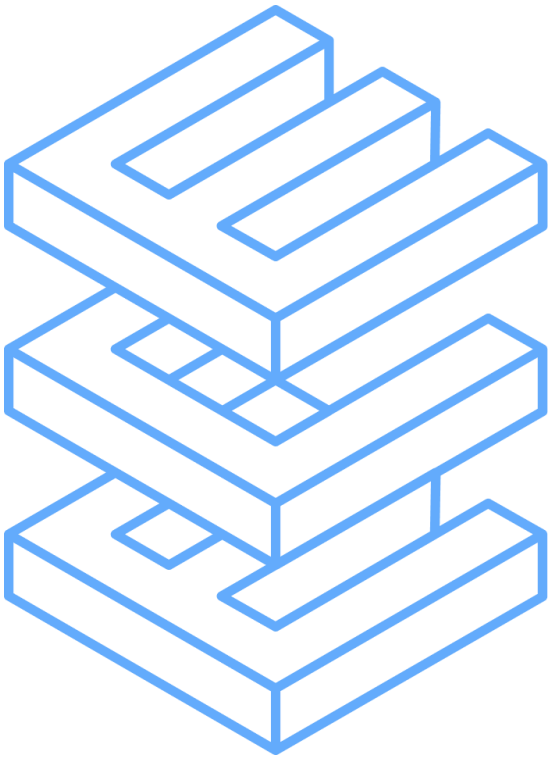
# 4. Infrastructure

## 4.1. Utilities and any Potential Impediment to Delivery

4.1.1. No utilities or infrastructure constraint has been identified that would prevent delivery of MM74. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan identifies that sewerage network upgrades will be required. This is a matter for coordination and phasing, rather than an impediment to allocation.

4.1.2. The site promoter will engage with Southern Water as part of the planning application process to confirm the required connection arrangements, network reinforcement and delivery programme.

4.1.3. Subject to normal technical investigations, infrastructure agreements and appropriate phasing, the site is capable of delivering approximately 150 dwellings without infrastructure matters preventing its development.



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