

## **Statement from Mrs Jacqueline Simmons (Resident).**

**Regulation 19 references 1189185, 1191239,1191333,1191339 & 1191343**

### **Matter 5. The spatial strategy**

**The effectiveness and soundness of the proposed distribution of new development in meeting social, economic and environmental objectives, whether it will achieve more than the sum of its parts and whether it will amount to positive planning.**

The points which I made in my submission (copy at the end of this statement) to the previous examination still stand. However I wish to add the following updated points based on events and updated information made known after submissions were made for the previous examination in 2024.

#### **a) Whether the plan's apportionment of development to larger and smaller settlements and freestanding allocations, and to different sizes of site, is effective in ensuring delivery and in meeting community needs**

- 1) Although there is a housing need in the Mid Sussex District as a whole, this need has still not been demonstrated to be uniformly spread throughout the District. MSDC have not provided any evidence to show where exactly in the district this need is most acutely situated and wanted, apart from in the main towns.
- 2) If development is not placed where that need actually is located and wanted there is a high risk it will not be effective in meeting it. If large developments are placed away from where residents actually need and want housing they will not take it up. For example there has never been a large housing need identified in the south west of the district but MSDC now wish to place their largest allocation in this plan there, DPSC3-7. This creates a new artificial need and supply of houses and does not fulfil an existing need. That is not a sound way to distribute new development. Apportionment becomes disproportionated and is therefore not sound.
- 3) By creating a new community you completely change the distribution of infrastructure. By forcing new infrastructure to be placed in new communities you take away resources and finances from existing infrastructure elsewhere putting that existing infrastructure under pressure and stress.
- 4) Providing new infrastructure is a high risk option as its delivery is not guaranteed. If it is not delivered or is delayed, but the houses are still built, it ends up with unsustainable communities. An example of infrastructure delivery issues can be seen in the attempt to build the new Bedelands Academy secondary school in the Burgess Hill Northern Arc development, part of policy DP9: Strategic Allocation to the north and north-west of Burgess Hill in the existing MSDC DP 2014-2031. WSCC have now paused the building of this school because current and predicted demand for secondary school places is not sufficient to build the new school at this time, this is after they had already increased their funding for it. The council's press releases of 26/03/2024 (updated 13/08/2025) and 02/08/2025 on their website give details of the reasons and figures behind it.
- 5) It is therefore not sound to place so much reliance on sites that would only be sustainable if new infrastructure is supplied and if it is not delivered are not close enough to a town or settlement which could provide a sufficient alternative.
- 6) If the size of a new development is more than three times the size of the existing community it does not enhance it but overpowers it. If the new village centre is built well away from the existing one it has the effect of ending up with two separate communities that do not integrate instead of one sustainable one. That is not a sound policy.

#### **c) Whether the spatial strategy takes an appropriate approach, at the strategic level, towards climate change mitigation, countryside protection, environmental protection, flood risk and heritage.**

7) It is the land in rural areas that has previously been used to provide the means to provide mitigation for climate change, countryside protection, environmental protection, flood risk and heritage for the previous development in the district. To change policies and focus on building on it instead reduces that mitigation but this has still not been addressed in the Council's policies and needs to be so to make it sound.

8) MSDC still appear to be treating the whole of the Low Weald as one uniform area with one Landscape Character and of having no value. It should be remembered that it has several different character areas. The part of the Low Weald to the east of the A23 has been sufficiently urbanised to have had its Landscape Characters already broken and that is not reversable. That part of the district to the west of the A23 has not and still retains its Landscape Character. MSDC proposed change to its spatial policy would permanently break the character of that western part as well, leaving it in the same broken state as the eastern part. That is not a sound policy. To make the policy sound would need it to look more closely of where exactly in the landscape communities sit to avoid unnecessary damage to landscape character.

## **Copy of my submission statement from the previous examination in 2024**

### **Statement from Mrs Jacqueline Simmons.**

**Regulation 19 Submission references 1189185, 1191239, 1191333, 1191339 & 1191343**

### **Matter 3: Vision, Objectives and Spatial Strategy Issue 1: Whether the Spatial Vision and Objectives for Mid Sussex Council are justified, effective, consistent with national policy and positively prepared?**

#### **Question 33.**

There is not an overall District Plan Spatial Strategy.

- a) It appears to fluctuate depending on what type of speculative site development offers are received.
- b) If the development location is favourable to the Council's ideas and views it appears to sub consciously look to interpret policies to justify it. If it is not favourable to them then the opposite will happen.
- c) There is no evidence that potential developers are given a clear view or guidance of what MSDC's strategy policy or precedence is. No copy of the call out letter to developers appears to be saved in the evidence file so there is no visible evidence to show what Spital Strategy they were advised of.
- d) Examples of random approach are given in my Reg 19 submission ref 1189185 Section 2 pages 2-17.

This means that the approach of MSDC is not justified, positively prepared or effective. It does not make the DP sound. A clear spatial vision is required to make the DP sound, effective and achievable.

#### **Question 34.**

It does not make effective use of land.

- a) It does not fully consider the existing land use nor justifies its change.
- b) Many proposed allocated sites and sustainable communities are on existing agricultural land. Some of that agricultural land is potentially Agricultural Land Classification grade 3a or above, the best and most versatile land (BMV).
- c) Footnote 62 on page 52 of the NPPF states "*Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher*

quality. The availability of agricultural land used for food production should be considered, alongside the other policies in this Framework, when deciding what sites are most appropriate for development.”

- d) DP policy DPC1 on page 90 of the Plan also endorses this “The best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a) and Grade 3b in the High Weald AONB will be protected from non-agricultural development proposals and will be protected from being covered by artificial surfaces or woodland that will prevent future use of the soils. Where significant\* development of any grade of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, detailed field surveys will need to be undertaken and proposals will be expected to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality.”
- e) The Sustainability Appraisal on page 43 paragraph 7 states “in the absence of site-specific surveys to identify Grades 3a and 3b, and in line with the precautionary principle, ALC Grade 3 is considered as BMV land”.
- f) On the objective of maintaining BMV It also states on page 44 paragraph 1 “Development proposals which would result in the loss of 20ha or more of greenfield land, of which is classed as ALC Grades 1, 2 and/or 3, would be expected to have a major negative impact on this objective”.
- g) However agricultural land is not included in MSDC Site Selection Methodology so the existence of BMV land has not been considered in the site selection process.
- h) MSDC reason is that most agricultural land in Mid Sussex is grade 3 and so would not be possible to tell the difference between grade 3a and 3b by just using mapping technology.
- i) Only a small amount of the grade 3 land in the MSD is potentially Grade 3a. Any loss of it would be significant to food production & security.
- j) MSDC are aware and admit that there is potentially grade 3a land in site DPSC3. In the Sustainability Appraisal Page B-74 paragraph 6 it states “a major negative effect would be likely to remain in relation to natural resources (SA Objective 6) owing to the large-scale loss of undeveloped land (including over 20ha of potential BMV land) because of the development”.
- k) I raised this at both Reg 18 and Reg 19 stages and more details can be found in my Reg 19 submission 1189185 Section 3g Agriculture pages 33-36.
- l) MSDC are aware but chose not to do anything about it at this stage. They advise that it can be taken into consideration at the planning stage. In DPC1 on page 90 of the plan they advise that *proposals will be expected to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality.*
- m) However, in the site promoter’s plan of DPSC3 all of this potential grade 3a land is earmarked for development including a school and the community facilities. To obtain the number of houses and infrastructure requested all of it must be built over and developed. Mitigation would not be possible unless the number of houses was at least halved.
- n) That would result in less infrastructure and non sustainability of the site. Therefore, the site would knowingly be at substantial risk of not being able to meet the principles of policy DPC1, but this has not been taken into consideration when the site was selected.

By not fully considering current land usage MSDC cannot therefore make best use of the land and actively looks to subvert its own and NPPF policies.

### **Question 36**

The scale and level of growth is not justified with regards to site DPSC3 in Sayers Common.

- a) It has a 7 day open shop, village hall, pub, church & hall, preschool, industrial and employments areas etc. Many young families have made it their home. It is not the declining type of village as depicted on page 39 of the DP paragraph 3.
- b) The Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan made in 2015 it allowed for 30 to 40 new houses being required in the village in the period to 2031. Since then, at least 180 have been built or planning permission granted showing that the village has taken on its share of new housing and growth.
- c) It is an existing sustainable village. However, add another 2543 houses to it and merge it with the existing village of Albourne and it will no longer be that. An extension usually smaller than then existing

body it is attached to not eight times bigger. The existing village would lose its identity and become instead just an annex to an unsustainable dormitory town.

- d) The infrastructure that MSDC advise would be needed to make the new town sustainable is not under their control and in the hands of others to finance and deliver. The size and amount of it would cost too much so has a very low chance of being delivered. Without delivery there is no sustainability.

The scale and level of growth of the village that MSDC is requesting cannot be delivered sustainably. The DP which requires it to be so is therefore not sound. A major change therefore needs to be applied to the way MSDC Spatial policy is dealt with in the DP if it is to be considered sound.

### **Question 39**

The constraints within the District appear to have influenced a policy that development should be avoided in the HWAONB.

- a) This is regardless of what type of land is being proposed for or demonstrating that harm would be caused to the High Weald Area Of Natural Beauty.
- b) It has resulted with most development focused in the Low Weald areas.
- c) This has led to the destruction of the Low Weald area Character type in the district. It also leads to the building of an urban barrier in the south of the district from its eastern to western boundaries. This removes any unbroken rural link between the HWAONB and the South Down National Park in the district. See my reg 19 submission 1189185 section 2a pages 2-7.

The constraints have therefore been negatively used, with regards to distribution of houses and growth, and to the landscape of Mid Sussex as a whole.

### **Question 42**

Please refer to my Reg 19 submission ref 1189185 section 2d Site Allocations 13-17 which discussed this matter.