Local Plan Hearing Statement

In Respect of Examination of Main Modification 88 to Draft Mid Sussex District Plan 2021 - 2039

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This Hearing Statement comprises Representations for and on behalf of Slaugham Parish Council (the 'Parish Council'), to the Examination Hearing in respect of the Main Modifications to the Draft Mid Sussex District Plan 2021 - 2039 (the 'Draft Plan').

1.2. These Representations have been prepared following the submission of Representations by the Parish Council to the Consultation on the draft Main Modifications to the Draft Plan in September 2026.

1.3. These Representations relate to 'Matter 7 Continued: Sites Added by the Draft Main Modifications' and in particular, Site MM88: Land West of Truggers, Handcross (the 'site'), as set out by the Inspector in the Week 4: Hearings Agenda, due to take place on Wednesday 04th November 2026. They follow the format of the key matters to be discussed, as identified by the Inspector in the Agenda, and amplified in the associated 'Guidance Note from the Inspector'.

1.4. The Parish Council seek to supplement these Written Representations by attending and participating in the Hearings in relation to this Site.

2. MM88: LAND WEST OF TRUGGERS, HANDCROSS

2.1. Representations in respect of Site MM88 are presented under the following Matters to be discussed, as identified by the Inspector in the Hearing Agenda:

- Impact on the National Landscape; and
- Site Location in Relation to Employment and Social Infrastructure.

2.2. These are addressed in turn below.

Impact on the National Landscape

2.3. It is noted that the Draft Plan is being Examined under the September 2023 version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The over-arching approach and guidance on development within designated National Landscapes is carried through to the latest version of the NPPF (August 2026). For these reasons, reference to NPPF guidance is in respect of the latest version.

2.4. The Parish Council concur with the conclusions of the LPA in their assessment of the site[1], that given the quantum of development envisaged at the site, its setting and potential impact, the proposals represent 'major development' for the purposes of the application of NPPF guidance on development within Protected Landscapes.

2.5. As noted by the LPA, the development would have a significant adverse impact on the designated High Weald Protected Landscape. It would result in the loss of medieval field systems; it would be located in close proximity to designated ancient woodland, which borders much of the northern boundary; and it would have a significant urbanising effect on the setting of an edge-of-settlement location.

2.6. It is acknowledged that the site currently has limited visibility from public vantage points, as a result of the linear residential development to the south and woodland block to the north.

[1] Major Development in the High Weald National Landscape - July 2026 (reference ENV22)

2.7. There are nonetheless numerous viewpoints from the rear of properties that adjoin this southern boundary.

2.8. The existing residential development on the north side of Horsham Road, as the village is approached from the west is characterised by modest, linear housing in an edge of settlement setting.

2.9. It is considered that this would be significantly altered by the introduction of a residential development served by a new access point, with a T-junction arrangement onto an undeveloped part of the public highway. It would result in a significant change and be likely to reveal extensive views of the development behind the existing housing on the north side of Horsham Road.

2.10. The development would have a detrimental impact on the rural qualities of both the site and its settlement edge setting.

2.11. It would also have a detrimental effect on the listed building (former Royal Oak Public House), that lies on the north side of Horsham Road and has undeveloped land to its rear.

2.12. The Vision Document prepared by the scheme promoters[2] and included in the LPA's Evidence Base, indicates a layout where the site would be substantively developed.

2.13. Development would be set off the northern boundary, substantively to comply with guidance on development in proximity of designated Ancient Woodland. However, much of the margin would be utilised for SuDs features, and thus would not be devoid of infrastructure works.

2.14. It is therefore concluded that delivery of the development would result in the substantial loss of the existing undeveloped character of the site.

2.15. The proposed vehicular access to the development is indicated to be positioned broadly centrally within the site frontage with the public highway.

2.16. This existing hedge line is considered to significantly and positively contribute to the rural setting of the western edge of the village.

2.17. The Parish Council therefore consider that the development should seek to retain as much of this as possible, in the interests of retaining the high quality rural character of the site's setting.

2.18. However, and whilst Policy MM88(9) states that the highway boundary hedgerow should be retained and protected, it is considered this would not be practically possible, having regard to the requirement to deliver satisfactory visibility splays in both an east and west direction to serve the needs of the proposed quantum of new housing (and proposed community uses).

2.19. Given this, it is submitted that Policy MM88(9) should be amended to acknowledge that the development would result in the substantive loss of much of the hedgerow frontage, and that it would therefore need to be replaced and mitigated by the provision of new planting. This should be required to be located as close to the public highway as is practically possible having regard to highway safety, and of a form that best ameliorates the impact of the proposed development on this rural edge of settlement location.

[2] Vision Document - Hallam Land Management - December 2022

Site Location in Relation to Employment and Social Infrastructure

2.20. Having concluded that development of the site would represent 'Major Development' for the purposes of the NPPF guidance on development within Protected Landscapes[3], the LPA set out considerations of 'exceptional circumstances' and the 'public interest' of the development[4].

2.21. The LPA consider that the 'exceptional circumstances' required to justify the major development of the site, is in part reliant on the 'public interest' of the provision of community infrastructure, in the form of a new community buildings/ village hall, bowling green and allotments.

2.22. However, such community infrastructure already exists within Handcross. The proposed provision of a community building and bowling green on the site is predicated on the loss (and replacement) of the existing facilities, which are on land within the same ownership.

2.23. These existing facilities are located within the built-up area of the village, immediately off the High Street, a short way to the south of the village playing fields. The Parish Council considers that their existing siting is geographically more suitable to meet the needs of the resident community. It fosters access by a wide range of the community by non-car modes of transport.

2.24. Conversely, the relocation of the facilities away from the core of the settlement to a peripheral location, to the west of the A23, would undermine the accessibility of such facilities by a wide range of the community who do not have reliance on a private car.

2.25. The proposed relocation of the facilities would be likely to result in access by persons with an increased reliance on the private car, given the site is separated from the greater proportion of the community and the limited attractiveness of the pedestrian route from the core of the village, crossing the A23 via an overbridge.

2.26. It is therefore considered that the relocation of the community infrastructure would in practice be a disbenefit, given it would result in the loss of the existing facilities within the village centre.

2.27. Even were these facilities considered to be necessary for upgrade, it is the view of the Parish Council that this would best be delivered on their existing site. This would be likely to best meet the needs of the community.

2.28. It is submitted that this could be secured through a policy clause requirement and/ or commuted sum secured as part of the proposed development.

2.29. This would also provide an opportunity for public space within the development to be more open and informal. This is considered more appropriate, having regard to the site's location and setting. It would for example, provide the opportunity for greater spacing of the development from the Grade II Listed Building to the south.

[3] As now detailed in Policy N4 of the NPPF (August 2026)
[4] MM88 - Stage 2 - Major Development in the High Weald National Landscape - July 2026 (reference ENV22)

3. SUMMARY

3.1. It is considered that allocation of development on Site MM88: land west of Truggers, by virtue of its quantum, setting and potential impact represents 'major development' for the purposes of the application of the NPPF guidance on development within Protected Landscapes.

3.2. It is considered it would have a significant urbanising effect on its edge of village setting. It would significantly increase views of the site, and its built form from public vantage points, including as a result of the formation of a new vehicular access point onto Horsham Road. The development would have a significant adverse impact on the rural characteristics of the site and its setting.

3.3. Whilst the Policy seeks for retention of the highway boundary hedgerow, it is considered this would be substantively lost, and thus require replacement and mitigatory planting.

3.4. Whilst the scheme envisages the provision of community infrastructure in the form of a new community building and bowling green, these already exist elsewhere within the village. The Parish Council consider their existing location is preferable to serve the needs of the resident community. As such any replacement, should be on the site of the existing. Public space on the allocation site, should be more open and informal, to better suit its location.