EXAMINATION OF THE MID SUSSEX DISTRICT PLAN 2021-2039 HEARINGS: WEEK 4

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MATTER 7 CONTINUED: SITES ADDED BY THE DRAFT MAIN MODIFICATIONS
Burgess Hill, MM60
Hurstpierpoint MM74, MM76, MM72, MM73 and MM75,
Albourne MM 82 & MM80
Sayers Common MM92

HEARING STATEMENT
FROM THE HURSTPIERPOINT SOCIETY

The Hurstpierpoint Society's response to the main modifications and the supporting Traffic and Transport Assessment addressed the significant cumulative impacts of nearly 6,000 additional dwellings across Hurstpierpoint, Sayers Common and Albourne.

It is the Society's view that the individual allocations cannot be considered in isolation from their cumulative effects on the surrounding countryside, the historic character and separation of settlements, and the existing transport and community infrastructure, particularly Hurstpierpoint High Street. Therefore, this hearing statement should be read as a supplement to the Response already submitted.

The planning constraints affecting individual, additional site allocations were not part of that Response, and this Hearing Statement now examines the specific site issues identified in the Inspector's Week 4 Guidance Note and Agenda.

The Society remains concerned that several of the additional allocations were previously rejected through the Council's own assessment process because of their negative impacts and it is not clear that the evidence now presented adequately demonstrates how these concerns have been overcome.

The Society therefore asks the Inspector to consider whether these allocations individually and cumulatively have been sufficiently justified and whether the necessary infrastructure and mitigation can demonstrably be delivered in full and in time to support the proposed developments.

Burgess Hill
MM60: Land East and West of Malthouse Lane, Burgess Hill

Describing this allocation as Burgess Hill obscures its actual location within the parishes of Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks, and its role within the Green Crescent.

The Green Crescent is a strategic belt of informal public space designed as a development buffer between Burgess Hill and Hurstpierpoint, and Burgess Hill and Hassocks. The allocation should be assessed in the context of the countryside and the settlement separation it would affect, rather than as an extension of Burgess Hill.

The land parcel was previously considered in the SHELAA as Site 1105 and rejected at Stage 3. The reasoning for this rejection was that the *"… quantum of development is likely to exacerbate existing issues at the A23/A2300 junction, as impacts are already arising through the allocation of DPSC1 and at this stage the Council does not have sufficient evidence to have confidence this site is deliverable in combination with DPSC1."*

It would be helpful to understand what new transport evidence, infrastructure commitments or deliverable measures have overcome the Council's previously identified concerns regarding the combined effects of this site and DPSC1 on the A23/A2300 junction.

The description of the site is also misleading. There are 2 parcels of land connected by a red line on a map. This red line is designed to provide "connectivity" between the 2 areas but the precise nature of this is unclear. It is described as an "internal active travel" route, presumably for walking or cycling, not cars. Does this provide a genuine sustainable access to the western parcel?

The proposed reliance on Danworth Lane raises serious questions about the suitability and safety of access to the western parcel, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists. The allocation should not be considered effective unless there is safe access in accordance with NPPF Paras 110(b) and 110 (d), and the proposed connections between the two parcels have been demonstrated and can be secured, and can meet the requirements of NPPF paras 104 and 105

The suggested road layouts within each area are also unsuitable for a bus service due to there being no through route. Therefore it would be necessary for a safe pedestrian access from the western site to the Jane Murray Way to reach the existing bus services.

The Contextual Masterplan suggests " Road infrastructure brought about by the Land at Malthouse Lane development also facilitates a potentially permeable continuous loop between Jane Murray Way and the A2300". Have the environmental consequences of this loop been assessed and is the land safeguarded?

Overall, this site would cause damage to the countryside, in an area designed to act as a strategic local gap, contrary to NPPF para 174 (b) and (d).

Hurstpierpoint

The issues around traffic and infrastructure are documented in the main modifications response by Hurstpierpoint Society and will not be repeated here except to refer to the road safety issues and the lack of any suggested mitigation to these for specific sites.

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

This site is outside the established physical and landscape northern boundary of Hurstpierpoint, which is formed by the Herring Brook. It is situated in the countryside and has always been used for agricultural purposes. With the current issues with food production and the call for improved food security, it is concerning that we are prioritising a short term gain in housing numbers for a long term loss of agricultural land.

The site makes an important contribution to preserving the local gap between Hurstpierpoint and Burgess Hill. The land parcel was previously considered as site 1075 in the SHELAA but rejected at Stage 3 because "*There is the potential for this site to contribute to the coalescence of settlements which is in conflict with the Strategic Objectives of the Plan."*

The Society now questions what material change in circumstances, evidence or policy justification now supports its allocation, particularly when other proposed developments would further erode the countryside separating Hurstpierpoint from Burgess Hill.

To maintain the village character, heritage and countryside around Hurstpierpoint, and in accordance with NPPF Para 174 (b), this site should be rejected on the evidence presented.

MM76: Land North East of Hurstpierpoint

The land parcel was previously considered as site 575 in the SHELAA but also rejected at Stage 3 because "*There is the potential for this site to contribute to the coalescence of settlements which is in conflict with the Strategic Objectives of the Plan."*

This site is intended to form an extension to the residential development at Idenhurst/Bramble Park, with access from this area. Responses from residents have questioned whether the existing road geometry can safely and satisfactorily accommodate the additional traffic as a through route to a further 150 homes due to the pinch points. When this is considered with the problems of traffic at the junction of Idenhurst and Cuckfield Road, would this site meet the requirements of NPPF Para 110 (b)?

Development of this site would materially alter the open countryside forming part of the northern setting of Hurstpierpoint, including views identified in the Hurstpierpoint Conservation Area Appraisal, (an MSDC SPD). The view to the north from the Hurstpierpoint Conservation Area in the village is described as "*From this northern part of the village there are good views towards Hurstpierpoint College and the surrounding countryside. It is an area of tranquillity, with views of fields beyond showing the relative isolation of the village from the north."*

The key structures of Hurstpierpoint College hold Grade II statutory heritage listings on the National Heritage List for England. The site lies directly between the Conservation Area and Hurstpierpoint College in an area of open countryside. Building on this land would impact both the view from the Conservation Area northwards and the setting of Hurstpierpoint College. The Society questions whether the Heritage Technical Note submitted by the promoter (MM76-1) has adequately established the significance of these views, the contribution made by the existing landscape and the extent to which the proposed allocation could preserve that significance.

MM72: Land East of College Lane, Hurstpierpoint
MM73: Land South of Hurst Wickham Barn, College Lane, Hurstpierpoint
MM75: Land South of Hurst Wickham Barn, College Lane, Hurstpierpoint

A planning application (DM/26/2433) has recently been submitted for site MM72 for 100 homes, though the number in the main modifications is for 75. The Transport Assessment submitted by the Applicants acknowledges the issues with junction capacity at Stonepound Crossroads and the congestion at the junction of College Lane with Hassocks Road/Wickham Hill. However, it ignores the problems in Hurstpierpoint High Street despite referencing the proximity of the A23 strategic link, which is accessed via the High Street. At the time of writing, there has not yet been a response to these issues from West Sussex Highways, but these are significant problems in the context of NPPF Para 110.

A previous planning application (DM/13/01250/FUL) on site, MM72, for a similar number of houses was refused by the Secretary of State, also at a time when there was no five year housing land supply. One of the main reasons stated was "*The development would undermine the purposes of the gap and would change its character."*

What material changes in circumstances or evidence now justify the allocation of land previously refused because development would undermine the purposes and character of the settlement gap?

The three sites at MM72, MM73 and MM75 lie directly south of the Hurst Wickham Conservation Area. The setting of Hurst Wickham Conservation Area is described in the Conservation Appraisal:

"Despite the spread of development from Hurstpierpoint to the south west, Hurst Wickham remains largely surrounded by open fields. This open, rural setting is very important to the character of the area as a small hamlet. Countryside views between the properties lining College Lane and from their rear gardens help to place the settlement in its rural context, as does the approach to the hamlet along College Lane with fields to one or both sides of the road. The open fields to the south of Hurst Wickham to the east of College Lane are particularly important in retaining a feeling of separation from Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks."

The Conservation Appraisal specifically refers to development within the setting of the Conservation Area:

"The setting of the Conservation Area is very important to the manner in which its special interest as a rural hamlet close to, but separate from, the larger villages of Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks is appreciated. Development within the setting of the Conservation Area, where this is acceptable, should be respectful of this, and in particular should preserve important views into and out of the Conservation Area, the character of the approaches to it, and the sense of separation from adjacent settlements."

Although the proposed allocation policies acknowledge the heritage sensitivity of this location, the Society questions whether the measures identified are sufficient to preserve the open rural setting, important views and sense of separation, which the Council's own Conservation Area Appraisal identifies as fundamental to the significance of Hurst Wickham. Building on these open fields would be contrary to NPPF Paras 190 and 195

This is in addition to the effect on the setting of the Grade II listed building of Wickham Farmhouse on the western side of the proposed site MM72. The access to the site would remove its existing link to the historical rural character and context of the farmhouse.

Albourne

Whilst outside Hurstpierpoint, these sites are only separated from Hurstpierpoint by the A23 and are close enough to have an impact on the infrastructure issues in the village.

MM82: Land East of London Road, Albourne
MM80: Grange View House, London Road, Albourne

These sites are for 250 homes (MM82) and 10 homes (MM80) and even when/if infrastructure is provided as part of the Masterplan for Sayers Common, residents are still likely to travel to and through Hurstpierpoint.

A solution in the response from WSCC is to "*Make proportionate contribution to provision of sustainable transport measures to benefit users of the A273/B2114 Stonepound Crossroads along local journeys"*

The Society remains concerned that the proposed mitigation does not adequately address the cumulative effects of these allocations on Hurstpierpoint High Street, especially the increase in congestion from additional bus services.

Consideration of Stonepound Crossroads and contributions towards sustainable transport to Hassocks station does not, in itself, demonstrate that the wider impacts on the routes used to access services and facilities in Hurstpierpoint have been satisfactorily assessed or mitigated. This will cause an impact on highway safety contrary to NPPF Para 110 (d).

The Society therefore questions how these allocations can be regarded as effective and deliverable when their cumulative effects on Hurstpierpoint High Street have not been adequately assessed and no specific, demonstrably deliverable mitigation for these effects have been identified.

The resulting traffic issues are contrary to NPPF Paras 104 and 105, with no consideration given to the potential impacts on the transport network except at Stonepound Crossroads, which is beyond Hurstpierpoint High Street. The financial contributions refer to improvements at Hassocks station, assuming this is the station to be used for travel, without any specific details as to what these will be.

Sayers Common
MM92: West House Farm, Henfield Road, Sayers Common

This site is proposed as being contiguous with site DPSC3 including phasing of infrastructure to ensure it's not an isolated site.

In the response from WSCC, concerns are raised about the scale and extent of infrastructure required and links this to a number of transport issues including improving bus service frequencies for sustainable travel and to benefit users of the A273/B2114 Stonepound Crossroads. The implication from this response is that without the necessary infrastructure in place in Sayers Common, traffic will come to and through Hurstpierpoint, emphasising the need for more details about the phasing of development.

The Society questions how MM92 can be demonstrated to be effective and deliverable without a clear and enforceable programme for the provision of the necessary infrastructure across the wider Sayers Common allocations. What safeguards will ensure that the development is not occupied before the transport, community and other infrastructure necessary to support it has been provided, rather than placing further pressure on existing facilities and routes though Hurstpierpoint.